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Aide-de-Camp's Library







# SELF AND PARTNERS

# BOOKS

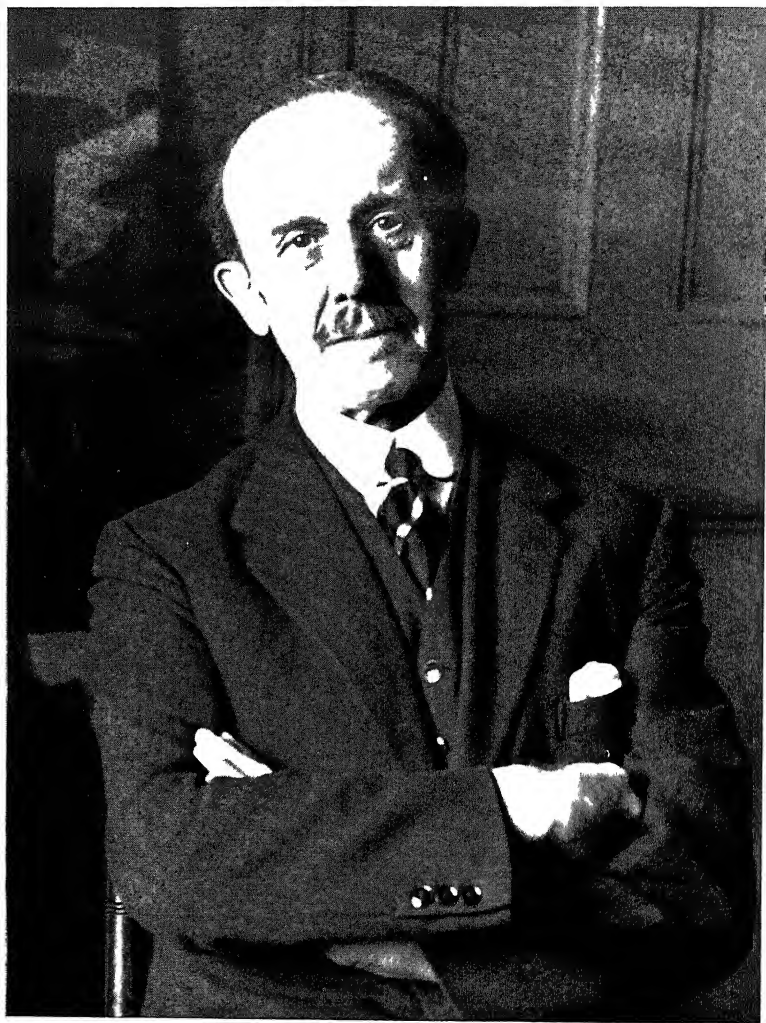
by SIR CHARLES HOLMES

K.C.V.O., V.-P.R.W.S., D.LITT.

- |      |                                                                                   |           |                    |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|--------------------|
| 1899 | * <i>Hokusai</i> (The Artist's Library)                                           | . . .     | Unicorn Press.     |
| 1901 | * <i>Constable</i> (The Artist's Library)                                         | . . .     | Unicorn Press.     |
| 1901 | * <i>De Cupidinis et Psyches Amoribus.</i> Apuleius.<br>(Editor)                  | . . . . . | Vale Press.        |
| 1902 | * <i>Constable and his Influence on Landscape<br/>Painting</i>                    | . . . . . | Constable & Co.    |
| 1903 | * <i>Pictures and Picture-Collecting</i> (The Col-<br>lector's Library)           | . . . . . | A Treherne & Co.   |
| 1909 | <i>Notes on the Science of Picture-Making.</i><br>10s. 6d.                        | . . . . . | Chatto & Windus.   |
| 1910 | * <i>Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters.</i><br>Grafton Galleries, 1910-11  | . . . . . | Philip Lee-Warner. |
| 1911 | * <i>Notes on the Art of Rembrandt</i>                                            | . . . . . | Chatto & Windus.   |
| 1913 | * <i>The Tarn and the Lake.</i> Thoughts on Life<br>in the Italian Renaissance    | . . . . . | Philip Lee-Warner. |
| 1916 | * <i>The Great Elizabethans</i> (Memorabilia cvii)                                |           | Philip Lee-Warner. |
| 1916 | * <i>The Great Victorians</i> (Memorabilia cviii)                                 |           | Philip Lee-Warner. |
| 1919 | * <i>Leonardo da Vinci</i> (British Academy :<br>Vol. ix.)                        | . . . . . | Oxford Press.      |
| 1921 | <i>Illustrated Guide to the National Gallery.</i><br>1s. 6d.                      | . . . . . | National Gallery.  |
| 1921 | * <i>Constable, Gainsborough and Lucas</i>                                        | . . . . . | Privately Printed. |
| 1923 | * <i>The National Gallery.</i> Vol. i. Italian<br>Schools                         | . . . . . | G. Bell & Sons.    |
| 1924 | <i>The Making of the National Gallery</i> (With<br>C. H. Collins Baker). 1s. 6d.  | . . . . . | National Gallery.  |
| 1925 | <i>The National Gallery.</i> Vol. ii. The Nether-<br>lands, Germany, Spain. 25s.  | . . . . . | G. Bell & Sons.    |
| 1927 | <i>The National Gallery.</i> Vol. iii. France and<br>England. 25s.                | . . . . . | G. Bell & Sons.    |
| 1928 | <i>The Iveagh Bequest and Collections</i>                                         | . . . . . | W. J. Stacey.      |
| 1929 | <i>An Introduction to Italian Painting.</i> 10s. 6d.                              |           | Cassell & Co.      |
| 1931 | <i>A Grammar of the Arts.</i> 5s.                                                 | . . . . . | G. Bell & Sons.    |
| 1933 | <i>Raphael.</i> The Modern Use of the Classical<br>Tradition. 7s. 6d.             | . . . . . | Christophers.      |
| 1935 | <i>The National Gallery.</i> 3 Vols. New and<br>Cheaper Edition, 7s. 6d. per vol. | . . . . . | G. Bell & Sons.    |

\* Works marked with an asterisk are out of Print





C J HOLMES  
(Photo London News Agency)

# SELF & PARTNERS

(MOSTLY SELF)

*Being the Reminiscences of*

C. J. HOLMES

‘Not Art, of course, or any nonsense of that sort.’

—FAMILY RULING, 1890.

‘What do you mean to do on retirement? To paint! Have you done any painting before?’

—OFFICIAL BLESSING, 1928.

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■

TO  
MY WIFE

■





## PREFACE

THOSE who look to me for sensation must, I fear, be disappointed. No splendid adventures, ambitions, intimacies like those of Cellini, Haydon, or my friend Rothenstein can brighten these pages. Mine has been a 'safety first' life of office jobs, done to pay my way, to give very various masters some return for their money, and, incidentally, to dilute passion, fashion and prejudice in the arts with tepid common sense. Where the details are so trite, a chronological narrative is, on the whole, less tedious than any forced effort at literary pattern. If the reader gets bored, he (or she) has only to skip five or six paragraphs to reach something quite different;—to escape from shopkeeping to pictures, from domestic events to administrative bliss, from realities to fishing.

My motto has been that of our good vicar, 'Truth with Charity.' Unpleasant characters, unreliable persons in general, may not have vanished from the world, but each, in time, condemns himself and needs no extra branding. Omission is more honest than whitewash, and safer. To restore the blurred outlines of fact, I have had to quote some remarks not primarily made for publication; casual sayings stick in the mind when actual events have grown dim. Old letters, too, compel so many revisions of crude memory that quotation from them is occasionally needed; though, as this is not a history of other people, I have refrained from drawing much upon that fashionable source of entertainment.

Few are likely to share my quite Chinese attachment to

## SELF AND PARTNERS

things so remote, so completely trivial, as the story of my forebears and childhood; yet to omit this would falsify the self-picture. As I look through the rather pitiful papers and letters of my parents, it is impossible to ignore the effect of their troubles upon my own beginnings. The Great War, and the improvements in motor-traffic, have made us so familiar with suffering and sudden death that we are no longer disposed to shed many tears over such insignificant victims of the past. But it is well to remember that, for several critical decades, the parochial clergy formed the chief link between misery growing conscious of its power, and a civilization by turns indifferent, contemptuous, frightened;—the frail barrier between forces which might otherwise, in clashing together, have smashed the patchwork machinery upon which we all depend for existence.

The death of Lord Curzon in 1925 provides a natural *finale*. He was almost the last of our elder Statesmen; with him an epoch comes to an end. What went before, so quickly do things move, is already ancient history and material for the chronicler. Recent events cannot yet be seen in the same true perspective, and are best left alone; especially when they happen to include very little that is in the least amusing.

Since I owe everything in life to the help and tolerance of others, I would specially ask forgiveness if some unlucky turn of phrase, or chance omission, makes me anywhere seem ungrateful. Retrospect also compels profound thankfulness for the good fortune which has saved me from the penalty of countless errors and follies. Does Providence try to make amends for the calamities of one generation by treating the next to the exact opposite? Only so can I explain the contrast between my father's luck and my own.

## PREFACE

Thanks are also due to the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office for permission to reprint sundry extracts from my evidence before the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries in 1928, and to Mr. Walter Stoneman and Mr. A. C. Cooper for the excellent photographs of J. D. Milner and Roger Fry.

London,  
Jan. 1936

## SOME PICTURES AND DRAWINGS IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- ADELAIDE. Rotherham Campagna. 1934.
- BLACKBURN. *Samlesbury Hall*. 10 paintings of Blackburn and District, and 33 water-colours.
- CAMBRIDGE. Farmyard, Soberton. 1924.
- JOHANNESBURG. Bortree Tarn. c. 1908.
- LEAMINGTON. Approach to Rome. 1935.
- LEEDS. Industrial Landscape and 6 water-colours.  
*University*. Summer on the Fells. c. 1908.
- LIVERPOOL. Yellow Wall—Blackburn, 1932, and 1 water-colour.
- LONDON. *Tate Gallery*. Red Ruin—Lucerne, 1906 ; The Burning Kiln, 1914 ; Whernside, 1917.  
*British Museum*. 3 water-colours.  
*Victoria and Albert Museum*. 4 water-colours.
- MANCHESTER. The Mythen, 1903 ; Biasca, 1908 ; Keswick Mountains, 1921.
- MELBOURNE. Black Hill Moss, 1910.
- OXFORD. The Old Man from Levers Water, 1910, and 1 water-colour.
- PRESTON. Watendlath Tarn ; Langdale Pikes ; The Scholar-Gipsy ; and 2 water-colours.
- SOUTHPORT. Newby Hall, 1923, and 1 water-colour.
- STOKE-ON-TRENT. The Eden near Lazonby, 1926, and 1 water-colour.
- SYDNEY. Stony Field—Middleton Teesdale, 1914-17.
- VANCOUVER. Temple Newsam Woods, 1932.

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## ERRATA

- p. 188, l. 8. *For* 'Richard' *read* 'Robert'  
p. 248, l. 21. „ 'Posilipo' „ 'Pozzuoli'  
„ l. 29. „ 'thank' „ 'could thank'  
p. 351, l. 9. „ '1931' „ '1921'
-



CHAPTER I  
PROGENITORIAL

(768-1868)

Ancestral Mythology; Charlemagne; Sir Robert and Miss Holmes; the hero of 'Edwin Drood'; John Holmes of the British Museum; the Rivingtons; my father's childhood; piety and 'the rod'; at Cambridge; in France; ordination; my mother; St. John's Parish Paper; smallpox; marriage; St. Michael's, Bromley; the cholera; breakdown; Morell Mackenzie; Mentone; Cornwall.

As a subject of polite conversation, a man's own family history ranks in interest with his prowess upon a suburban golf-course. Nevertheless it is the recognized duty of a biographer, particularly if his subject be of mean or commonplace origin, to discover for him some fragment, filament, figment or myth of respectable ancestry. I make no apology, therefore, for delving in my studio cupboard, and fishing out a grimy pedigree, wherein my birth is recorded in an obscure corner, the place of honour at the top being occupied by Charlemagne. That surprising document, overlapping when unrolled the whole dining-room table, starts creditably enough. Charlemagne; Rollo, Duke of Normandy; Adeliza, sister of William the Conqueror; Peter de Brus (an ancestor of Robert, unaccountably omitted from the D.N.B.), are but a few of the notable steps in descent. A descent indeed it soon becomes; the track narrowing down finally to one Anthony Lister of Newsome, younger brother (if we trust this flattering record) to Thomas Lister of Westby, who has his due place in the orthodox Ribblesdale pedigree. But of younger brother Anthony that pedigree says no word, and with him, I fear, must vanish Charlemagne and all the rest of them. Elizabeth Lister,

reputed Anthony's descendant, undeniably married in 1735 my ancestor, Christopher Swainson; and only with that marriage can sober history start.

Charlemagne, however, is not the only hero in our legendary past. A family myth connects us also with Sir Robert Holmes, the swaggering sea-captain whom Pepys so heartily disliked. This gentleman's other conspicuous memorial to-day is his tomb in the church at Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, where he once was governor. The tomb is surmounted by a statue, originally, as the story goes, representing Louis XIV, which was taken by Sir Robert, either in one of his prizes or from a wreck. The face was then re-cut into its new owner's likeness, and Sir Robert's head now tosses under the great flaps of the helmet with a resemblance so exact and so comic to my aunt, the late Miss Holmes, that I am compelled to a sort of sneaking respect for the legend. The thing, of course, is a gross caricature of that clever, lively, kindly lady, but the expression is identical with her habitual gesture when Radicals, flaunting young women, or grammatical solecisms were forced upon her notice.

Alas! neither pedigrees nor armorial bearings give any support to this queer iconographic relationship. My father's folk (so far as I know, and my cousin, Stephen Holmes, can trace them) make their bow to history with no Sir Robert, but with plain 'John Holmes, Tayler, of Rochester.' Since he died in 1703, he must have been Sir Robert's contemporary, and, at best, some lowly connexion. From the frequent occurrence of the name Jasper among John's descendants,<sup>1</sup> he presumably was connected with the Jasper

<sup>1</sup> John Holmes was followed by several generations of City merchants, dealing in cheese and, more particularly, in leather, three of them in succession being members of the Leathersellers' Company. A mural tablet in the Church of St. Vedast recorded their undistinguished descent. My great-grandfather, Nathaniel Holmes (b. 1764), had been a liveryman in the aforesaid Company, but about 1810 he retired to live at Derby, where he died thirty years later. In 1794 he had married a certain Dorothy Farmer, and with Dorothy's descendants ambitions arose for other things than cheese or leather.

Of the twelve children, only five lived much beyond infancy. The eldest of their three sons, Nathaniel Reynolds Holmes, had a son also named Nathaniel,

family of Rochester, so that in compiling a list of my mythical relatives I can fairly add to Charlemagne and Sir Robert Holmes the real hero of 'Edwin Drood.'

The main facts about my grandfather, John Holmes (1800-1854), will be found in the Dictionary of National Biography, so that I need only supplement them on the personal side. In some unexplained fashion he had made himself a remarkable linguist, and his abilities were displayed in the great Catalogue, of no less than 815 pages, which he compiled for Cochran of 148 Strand, a branch of the Rivington firm. The result was his translation in 1830, through the influence of Lord Bexley and others, to the Manuscript Department of the British Museum. There he worked for the remainder of his life, during the latter part of the time as Assistant-Keeper. Taking a special interest in ecclesiastical history, he became the correspondent, it would seem, of the whole Bench of Bishops. His papers indicate friendly or familiar relations not only with the Duc d'Aumale and Lord Ashburnham, whose collections he helped to form, but also with historians and men of letters, such as Guizot and Lingard, Thackeray and Prosper Mérimée. A few of the letters are of interest even now. His relations with Panizzi, the Trustees, and his colleagues at the Museum, as well as with others like Lockhart, a man not easily pleased, were also most cordial. His portrait in wax relief by Richard Cockle Lucas, of 'Flora' fame, bears the inscription 'Domus Holmes, British Museum, 1849,' and the punning nickname, which recurs not infrequently in letters addressed to him, is

who was an electrical pioneer, and the inventor, among other things, of the Bude Light. The elder daughter, Harriet, marrying Joseph Toynbee, F.R.S., the famous aural surgeon, became the mother of the talented family which included Arnold and Paget Toynbee. My grandfather, John Holmes, the second surviving son, possessed, as we shall see, a somewhat similar blend of piety and scholarship. The third son, Richard Jackson Holmes, started life as a cadet in the forces of the East India Company, and as such was painted in 1823 (R.A., No. 311) by R. R. Reinagle. He looks a handsome, reckless fellow, and his letters from India, where he died in 1835, were preserved until quite recent times, in virtue of their racy comments on contemporary life. Ultimately they fell into the hands of a relative, a thorough-going Tory, who was so shocked by the gossip which they contained about eminent persons that she destroyed them, in blissful ignorance of the pecuniary value of scandal.



some indication that the stout little snub-nosed antiquary was no unsociable creature.

This cordiality did not apparently extend to his family connexions. With his father's people, except for the correspondence with his officer-brother in India, he had little to do. Nor was he more intimate with his relatives by marriage. His wife was the eldest daughter of Charles Rivington (1754-1831), who had for years been head of the Rivington firm. The Rivington family tradition was intensely respectable, being, like their sermons and devotional books, no less safe doctrinally than commercially. From their standpoint my grandfather's modest income, absorption in scholarship and indifference to personal profit, appeared reprehensible, even dangerous. Though not altogether displeased that their new connexion should write for the 'Quarterly Review' and have other modest claims to literary repute, the fear that they might some day be called upon to subsidize a household so precariously financed was a bar to close acquaintance. The Holmeses were, after all, poor relations, of whom it was well not to see too much. Of all the family, only my great-uncle, William Rivington the printer, and his kindly, masterful wife became real friends.

After his marriage to Mary Anne Rivington in 1832, John Holmes and his wife continued, for a while, to live in the British Museum; but moved to Highgate shortly before my father's birth in April 1834. My father, Charles, was the eldest of their five children, all of whom were given the name of Rivington. Richard, afterwards Librarian at Windsor, came next. The third son, Herbert, entered the Navy; retired on account of his health while still Lieutenant, and at the time of his death was private secretary to Lord Dufferin. Two daughters, Mary Anne and Emma, came last.

The children were brought up, as the custom then was, in an atmosphere of intensive piety and corporal punishment. My grandmother, like her husband, was a good linguist, well read, and, with all her strictness in religious

matters, neither unjust nor inconsiderate. Yet the record she kept of the régime by which her tiny children were drilled into virtue makes curious reading in these more easy-going days, so curious that I may be forgiven if I quote one or two extracts. My father, as the eldest of the family, seems to have suffered most from the parental creed.

‘Charles was very naughty to-day, and it was necessary for his Papa to use the rod.’ Poor little fellow! He was not yet four. Then, a few days later: ‘This morning Charles was repeating an answer in Watts’ First Catechism, relative to the Day of Judgment. Upon my remarking that this was a very solemn day, he said, “Then we shall have a plum bun.” Upon my expressing surprise at this strange answer, he said, “Why, on a very solemn day you gave us each a bun.” Of course this led to an explanation of the custom of having hot cross buns on Good Friday, and a resolve on my part to discontinue it in future.’

Later comes his fourth birthday and a summary of his attainments. ‘He can repeat the 23rd Psalm—and seventeen other texts, sixteen Hymns, Watts’ First Catechism and a chapter in the Infant Christian’s Catechism; he can read all words of two letters at sight and many words of three letters,’ etc., etc. The virtues of charity and self-sacrifice were also duly exacted. ‘One day not long since, I asked the little boys to give a trifle towards a fund for the relief of the poor, and also something towards the Church Missionary Society. Charles very cheerfully gave ten shillings to one object, and something less to the other. Richard, while examining his little store, observed, “But I must not give all my living.”’ Considering the ratio of the levy to the probable contents of a five-year-old’s money-box, the hesitation may be excused.

Soon the teaching began to recoil upon the teachers. ‘A few days since Charles said to me, “Papa mocked me, Mama, one day—and should he? He would not like to be mocked himself, and you know he should do to others as he would like them to do to him.”’ Again, ‘I was reading

the history of our Saviour's purging the Temple, and after some remarks upon the sin of desecrating such places, Charles said, "But Mr. Rivington sells books in St. Paul's Church-yard." On another occasion, when Sabbath-breaking, and Sunday travelling in particular, were being explained and condemned, the logical Charles inquires, 'Then no ticket-collector can love God?' 'I changed the conversation,' remarks his mother, 'as I did not wish the children to become unduly censorious.'

The whippings, if I may trust contemporary report, were no less consistently applied, at least in my father's case, than were the Bible lessons. Even those outside the home circle did not always escape my grandfather's cane. His nephew, Luke Rivington, was one day caught by him when engaged in some boyish prank, and duly beaten. Thinking from his manifestations of suffering that the punishment had perhaps been rather too severe, my grandfather consoled him with half-a-crown. The future Monsignor promptly dried his tears, and remarked with smiling impudence that he would always be glad to take another whipping for another half-crown.

Though repugnant to our current feelings about infant psychology and education, this sharp spiritual and physical discipline was not followed by any evil consequences. The children became neither prigs nor hypocrites. On the contrary, they acquired a local repute for their keen wit, their high spirits, their ready powers of versification, their acting in charades, and their skill with their fingers. 'The Holmeses were not behind the door when tongues were served out' was a label attached to them in their schooldays, and I remember meeting a very old lady in a country house, who, on hearing my name, asked me whether I was any connexion of 'the three brilliant brothers, Herbert, Richard and poor Charles' whom she had known at Highgate fifty years before. Clearly they were not much the worse for their piety or the paternal cane.

My father's most conspicuous gift at this time was

mechanical. He invented a steamboat which, with a noble disregard for friction, was to utilize directly the thrust of the piston; he was particularly noted for his skill with the lathe, on which he turned small ivory boxes and cups of singular fragile refinement. In common with his brothers and sisters, he also showed some interest in art. From childhood they had the run of the British Museum, and so obtained a precocious familiarity with Illuminated MSS. This dominated their early essays in painting, and left its mark on the later work of the two elder brothers in a certain dryness of style, which was reinforced by their enthusiasm for the Pre-Raphaelite movement.

The boys went in due course to Highgate School, with some of their Rivington cousins, and in the autumn of 1852 my father went up to Clare Hall, Cambridge. The University Calendar for 1855 throws some light on his activities. He was stroke of his College Boat in the Easter term of 1854. In College cricket during the summer term his average was 29, his best score being 59 against Corpus. Centuries came less easily then. Only six higher scores than this were made in all the matches which the Calendar records, and the best of them is only 75, which happens to have been made against my father's bowling. One curious custom seems to have prevailed. Jesus had at this time a deadly performer with the ball, and an excellent bat, named Jiggins, who was a tower of strength in their College matches. But in a Long Vacation match Jiggins reappears—playing for the College Servants and skittling out the 'Gentlemen.'

Skating was, however, the accomplishment with which my father's contemporaries all seem to have associated him most definitely. His cousin, the late Canon Rivington, when recalling this period many years later to my mother, writes: 'Charles, your dear husband, was a great admiration of mine . . . he was so extraordinarily clever, as all the family were. His skating on the Hampstead Ponds was the delight of many people. "Is Mr. Holmes coming down to skate to-day?" they would ask. He was first in everything

he attempted. I can also see him in a deep storm of snow, catching sight of me as a small boy in one of the Hall windows in our house at Hampstead, and throwing a large snowball which broke the window and scattered snow all over me. Yes, my dear Mary, there were giants in the Earth in those days.'

This fair promise was abruptly clouded. Just as my father was making his little mark at Cambridge, and reading with a reasonable expectation of high honours, he was recalled to London by a catastrophe—my grandfather's sudden death. John Holmes had never been of a saving habit, and a reduction in expenditure was the first necessity. A council of Rivington uncles gathered to consider the future of their sister and her family. The library went in due course to Sotheby's; Richard was given a post in the British Museum; and, since Herbert's naval career could not well be interrupted, my father's Cambridge degree remained as the obvious sacrifice. He was notoriously clever with his fingers; an apprenticeship to some watchmaker would enable him in a short time to contribute something to the family exchequer.

Though naturally conscientious, and feeling very deeply his responsibility towards his widowed mother, my father could not welcome this economic offer. He had set his heart upon taking orders, and a share in the social movement which Kingsley and Maurice had started. This intention, this calling, he would not abandon lightly. He returned to Cambridge to consult his friends. They immediately proved the sacrifice unnecessary, combining to make him a loan whereby he could remain in residence for another year, and take his degree without giving his uncles any excuse for further benevolence. But the anxiety occasioned by these domestic troubles handicapped him fatally in the Schools, and he had to be content with a place far lower than his original hopes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A curious fate still seems to pursue our family at the older Universities. I was called away from Oxford in my third year. My brother died at Cam-

To repay his friends was my father's next concern. With that purpose, he spent two years in France, chiefly at Pont-sur-Seine, as tutor to the young Casimir-Périer, who was destined in after years to become President of the French Republic. My father quickly identified himself with the ways of this kindly and cultured French household: so much so, that he seemed almost a complete Frenchman when he came back to carry out his original purpose. The period when he took orders in December 1857 was one of considerable religious enthusiasm, and the uplifting of the working classes by means of education and personal intercourse was the ideal of all thoughtful men. My father felt that the East End of London was the proper sphere for him, so in due course he became curate to the Rev. C. H. Carr, vicar of St. John's, Limehouse. At Limehouse, in the summer of 1858, he met one of the vicar's nieces, an attractive girl of eighteen or nineteen, and since this Miss Dickson is of some importance to this narrative, it may be well to present her in proper form.

Mary Susan Dickson<sup>1</sup> was born at Preston in 1839. Being the eldest of a large family, she soon had occasion to exercise the rights of seniority in guiding and teaching her juniors, and to learn household management. Beginning at

bridge in his second term. In the next generation, my elder son, just before taking his final Schools, was run over by a motor-car, and put *hors de combat*, so far as further reading went. Only my younger son, choosing London in preference to Cambridge, had an uninterrupted University career.

<sup>1</sup> Though claiming descent from the family of Keith, Earl Marischal, the Lancashire branch of the Dickson family appears to have no recorded ancestor before William Dickson (or Fraser?) who married one Elizabeth Bradkirk in 1665. They used the arms of Dickson of Buhtrig, with the motto '*Fortes Fortuna juvat*.' Lancashire at this time, and for another hundred and fifty years, was more or less isolated from the Midlands and the South by the difficulty of crossing Chat Moss. The Dicksons were no more adventurous than their neighbours. Acquiring some of the toughness and solidity of the boulder-clay under their feet, they lived in and around Poulton-le-Fylde, where their town house still stands in the market-place.

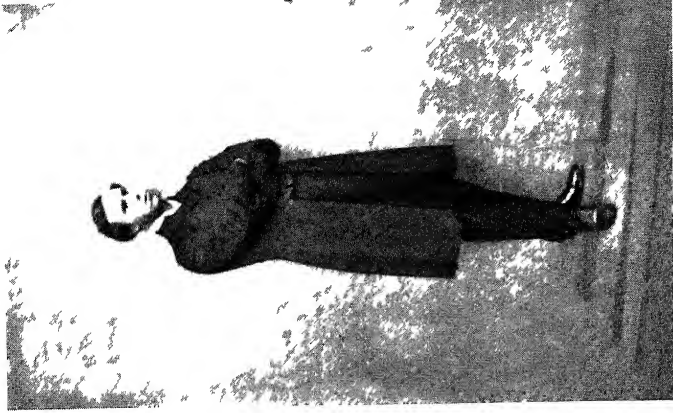
At the end of the eighteenth century, a faint breath of romance ripples across this undistinguished trickle of descent, when Richard Dickson, the surviving male representative of the family, married Margaret Briggs. Margaret's mother had been a Miss Sympson of Kendal. As a girl she had attended the ball given in 1745 by the town of Kendal to Prince Charles Edward and his officers, and had the honour of dancing with the Prince. She lived till

home with a governess, her education was continued, in less orthodox fashion, at a private school where boys were in a strong majority. On wet days a four-wheeler would call for her, and then go round to collect the youngsters of the neighbouring families of Gorst and Hulton; half-a-dozen or more being often crowded into the ancient vehicle, among them one who afterwards attained some prominence in politics as Sir John Gorst. Her formal education was completed in London at a finishing school in Westbourne Terrace, where her provincial French accent and country-cut frocks caused her some trying moments on her first arrival.

Visits to concerts and picture-galleries were part of the London school programme, but not even Jenny Lind at the height of her fame impressed my mother so profoundly as did the sight of the East End of London. Her aunt, Diana Swainson, had recently married the Rev. C. H. Carr, and at their vicarage in Limehouse my mother became a frequent visitor. She had seen much distress in Lancashire, but the immensity of this London area, in which there seemed to be no relief of any kind from monotonous squalor, affected her deeply and permanently. On her return to Preston, after leaving school, she soon began to interest herself in teaching and visiting, principally among the hand-loom weavers, although the management of a con-

the age of ninety-seven, and my grandfather Dickson, who had often heard her tell the story, repeated it to me when he introduced me to her two portraits, one representing her at the end of her life, the other a Romney of the Kendal period. This grandfather, Joseph Briggs Dickson, became a solicitor of some position in the county, while his younger brother, Thomas, took orders, and settled in the family living of Eastchurch.

The brothers, Joseph and Thomas, married sisters, daughters of Anthony Swanson of Liverpool, a descendant of the Christopher Swanson and Elizabeth Lister whom we have heard of already in connexion with Charlemagne. The Swansons appear to have come from Stainforth, the hamlet perched so picturesquely on the edge of Ribbleshead Moor. Roger Swaynson de Staynforth (ob. 1610) is the first of whom I have note. From Stainforth the family moved downstream to Gisburn, and thence scattered southward to Preston and Liverpool, intermarrying with Grandorges, Inmans, Clays, Birleys, Hornbys, prospering as merchants, shipowners, manufacturers, landed proprietors, and exhibiting a marked inclination towards divinity and scholarship. Of the marriage between Joseph Briggs Dickson and Susanna Swanson, my mother was the eldest child.



MY FATHER, 1862



MY MOTHER, about 1861





siderable household and the demands of society could not be disregarded.

An early photograph helps materially in reconstructing this period of her life. It shows that she was exceedingly handsome, the face a regular oval, the expression thoughtful and serene, with just so much liveliness about the eyes and mouth as to challenge attention. And she received it in plenty. From the moment that she left school, her good looks, her good sense, her spirit and her skill as an archer brought her many admirers.

Though she had met her uncle's curate at Limehouse in 1858, their interest in each other had not been strong enough to produce a continuance of the acquaintance. On a further visit to Limehouse, the attraction became much more powerful, but my father, having no immediate prospect of preferment, was compelled to silence, and to allowing things in the North to take their chance. Whether by accident or by design, he found one means of keeping himself in mind. He started producing the 'St. John's, Limehouse, Parish Paper,' and sent a copy of each number to Preston. This method of communication was probably less unpromising than it sounds. I have no knowledge of the history of parochial journalism, but imagine that, in 1860, any such publication must have been a novelty. And the St. John's Parish Paper was more than a novelty. It was probably unique. My father was editor, chief contributor, compositor, printer, publisher, and, with help from his brothers, more particularly my uncle Richard, its illustrator as well.

This forgotten pioneer among such publications deserves a little notice to itself. The conception was my father's. To realize it he borrowed a hand-press and a quantity of discarded type from his uncle, William Rivington, the friendly head of the Gilbert and Rivington firm. He taught himself wood-engraving and lithography, so that each number might be embellished with a double-page plate in addition to the letterpress. With his own hand he set all the type,

and printed every sheet and every picture, in his lodgings at Nos. 2 and 3 Aston Street.

The inspiration of the pictures, where they are not severely practical, is Pre-Raphaelite, coupled with memories of Illuminated MSS. The best of them are the headpiece and tailpiece (February 1860) by my uncle Richard to Tennyson's 'Home they brought her warrior dead.' Though accompanied by somewhat trivial initials and scrollwork, the former might well have come from the hands of Miss Siddal, the latter from Rossetti himself. My father's illustrations are generally more practical:—woodcuts of the church, and a map of the parish printed in gold; lithographs of the Union Jack and its components, of University gowns and hoods, all coloured by hand (how that curate must have worked!), a large plate of the St. John's School Festival in Petersham Park (quaintly successful in spite of the impossible subject), and in December 1861 another Christmas Carol, printed in brown and gold, and decorated in twelfth-century style with an admirable foliated border. In this, his lithographic swan-song, my father attains a first-class professional standard both as a designer and an executant.

The Paper, a small quarto measuring 8 in. by 5 $\frac{3}{4}$  in., 'ran' for two years, beginning in January 1860 and ending in December 1861. The effective cover and some of the contents are printed in red and black during 1860. In 1861 the red is used more sparingly; the volume contains only nine numbers instead of the ten for 1860, as if the strain on the editor's powers were beginning to tell, and the December issue contains the notice, 'The Editor of the Parish Paper is obliged by his health to discontinue printing the Paper, at least for the present.' It was a time of universal distress. Smallpox was rife, and my father, in combating the troubles around him, at last overtaxed his strength, contracting the disease so severely that he was never the same man again, either in constitution or in appearance.

Miss Dickson all this while remained invisible, if not inaccessible. My father had stayed with some of her people in

stole a maiden from her place,  
 Lightly to the warrior stept,  
 Took the face-cloth from the face;  
 Yet she never moved nor wept.

Rose a nurse of ninety years,  
 Set his child upon her knee—  
 Like summer tempest came her tears—  
 'Sweet my child, I live for thee.'



A PAGE FROM THE PARISH PAPER  
 OF ST. JOHN'S, LIMEHOUSE FIELDS, February, 1860  
 (Edited and produced by my father, when curate.)



Liverpool, and had even made a flying visit to Preston, *en route* for a holiday chaplaincy; but had no luck. He was merely able to make a sketch of what he thought to be *the* house; and sketched the wrong one. However, in July 1862, Miss Dickson came up to London with her mother to see the Great Exhibition. In the Exhibition they met Mr. Carr with another clergyman who said, 'Well, Miss Dickson! Don't you remember me?' It was my father, so changed by illness that she had failed to recognize him. The check was but momentary. On the following day they became engaged.

Almost immediately they were compelled to separate. My father was due at Dumcrieff as holiday chaplain to Lord Rollo, while my mother was witnessing the building of blockade-runners on the Ribble and the semi-starvation brought about by the Lancashire cotton famine. When in the spring of 1863 the first bales of cotton reached Leyland a few miles away, the jubilant mill-workers joined hands and danced around them singing the Doxology.

My father, meanwhile, being anxious to obtain more lucrative work, accepted the post of Vice-Principal of the Training College for Schoolmasters at Culham. It proved neither comfortable nor congenial. 'I shouldn't do for a schoolmaster,' he writes, 'even if I didn't detest the business, which I do. I feel quite competent to undertake a parish, but I don't feel equal to undertaking the board and lodging, on the most economical principles, of nearly 100 people.' He resigned at the end of six months to go to St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, as curate to the Rev. W. (Hang Theology!) Rogers.

It was a novel experience, for the parish was chiefly inhabited by Jews. He was thus enabled to witness the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles in the back yard next to his own lodgings, roofed over for the occasion with boughs. He had one less agreeable experience. The house in which he lived was found to be on fire, and my father, at some personal risk, extinguished the flames with his own sheets and blankets. Far from getting any thanks, he merely sacri-

ficed his bed-linen; for the landlord himself had set the place alight to get the insurance money.

At this time St. George's in the East, already of evil repute among waterside districts, became notorious on account of the riots occasioned, ostensibly, by the ritualistic practices of the Rev. Bryan King. While an exchange of livings was being arranged, my father was asked by Dr. Tait, then Bishop of London, to take charge of this troubled parish. There he spent the early part of 1864, among the sailors and the harpies who preyed upon them, before Father Lowder and his colleagues took the place in hand.

Finally, the offer of the new Mission District of St. Michael's, Bromley-by-Bow, enabled my parents to look forward to marriage at an early date. It foreshadowed also immense responsibilities. The stipend was very small, the inhabitants of the parish numbered more than 25,000, the majority being exceedingly poor and dependent upon casual labour. The wealthiest were artisans and small shopkeepers. The only approach to parochial buildings or machinery was a good Boys' School, which could be used for services on Sunday. No house of any kind in the whole parish was obtainable for the vicar, until a Mr. C., who had taken a great interest in the Schools, placed one at my father's disposal.

The new venture met with no approbation from his family. 'I believe,' he writes in July, 'that my marriage is looked upon by my uncles (for I have no relations on my father's side but cousins whom I never see) as too impudent to be encouraged,' and there was some doubt at first as to the place of the wedding. The Parish Church at Preston was then the only church in that town of 90,000 inhabitants where weddings were permitted. But an old custom of throwing money on leaving the church, which caused the assembly of a rabble, had caused my mother to dread the ceremony there, so the wedding ultimately took place, in August 1864, at the little country church of Thornton, near Rossall. A fortnight later the couple started life at Bromley.

The house which had been lent to them proved to be fairly good, but it was on the brink of Limehouse Cut. Into that stagnant stretch of water, industrial effluents poured regularly. The smells were abominable, and the chemical emanations, as the new-comers soon discovered, were so potent as to corrode all the metalwork in the place. But they were full of hopes for the future. Before September was over, the foundation stone of a church was laid amid general enthusiasm. In October a second foundation, of a School-Church, prepared the way for a mission district, called St. Gabriel, whereby their unwieldy parish would be reduced from 25,000 to 19,000.

All continued to go well until the following summer (1865), when the bad air proved too much for my mother. She struggled on until the Church was consecrated in August, and then went north to recover from blood-poisoning. Immediately afterwards my father was attacked with something akin to typhoid fever, and it became evident that they could no longer safely live and work in the house which had been lent to them. There were other reasons for leaving it. The owner, now my father's first churchwarden, had given much help to the Schools, and had promised still more towards the Church, for he was a wealthy man. But the price for his help, as the months went by, increased until it became complete parochial control. The vicar he hoped would still 'be his right hand.' My father endured, until the churchwarden also claimed the management of the Boys' School. This could not be granted. Mr. C. thereupon withdrew all the financial support he had promised, and my father was only able to make good the resulting deficit on Church and Schools by sacrificing the whole of his small patrimony.

Since no other house could be found in their own parish, it was now necessary for my parents to live in Poplar. Then came fresh troubles. They had just started for a summer holiday in 1866, when cholera broke out in the parish. My father returned to his post at once, my mother followed soon. Then with a plucky curate, Mr. H. D. Moore, and



the parish doctor, who after a month or two fell a victim to the disease, they worked night and day to relieve the sufferers. The extent of their labours was considerably increased by the flight, in terror, of another curate. Not until the epidemic was practically over could my father's remonstrances recall him to his duty, and to an ironic recompense. His sermon, 'Thankfulness for the Departure of Cholera from the District,' was preached with such heart-felt conviction that his hearers presented him with a clock.

The effect of the strain upon those who had stood their ground was soon apparent. My mother was taken seriously ill after the arrival of a still-born child, and while she was recruiting at Hastings it was noticed that my father had developed a hacking cough. This was dismissed by the new Bromley doctor as mere 'clergyman's throat,' so the vicar worked on, though in constant pain, through the long and snowy winter, the calls upon him being specially heavy owing to widespread industrial distress.

The outspoken gratitude of his parishioners was some recompense; the completion of a new vicarage in the spring of 1867 promised to save him some fatigue, though the damp walls did the cough no good. His overworked condition was evident; he was ordered a rest, but Fate once more was against him. Leaving hot weather in London, he went to Alloa to take Sunday duty for a few weeks. He found the place under snow, and the bitter cold continued during the whole of his stay, giving him no respite from his throat trouble. Nevertheless the parish continued to prosper so wonderfully that the vicar and his wife were almost afraid of their good fortune: it seemed too good to last.

At the London Hospital, some years before, my father had made the acquaintance of a young doctor, Morell Mackenzie, who had since then made a name for himself by his skill with the laryngoscope. Hearing from a friend of my father's ill-health, Mackenzie begged him to call. My father did so, and the trouble was instantly diagnosed as tuberculous, a verdict which a second specialist confirmed. The work to

which he had devoted his life was to be stopped at once; London was to be left for good, and the winter, if not all succeeding winters, was to be spent in a warmer climate.

Against such a sentence there could be no appeal. Funds had to be scraped together, and arrangements made for the charge of the parish; but friends were kind, and early in October the pair were able to leave for the Riviera. The Casimir-Périer family met them *en route*, doing what they could to make the journey comfortable, so that the invalid reached Mentone without any relapse. There he seemed to benefit so greatly by the change that plans were made for the winter of the following year. He was able, too, for the first time in his life, to indulge himself in sketching, and the water-colours he made at this period are my earliest artistic recollections.

Their schemes for the future were suddenly upset by a suggestion from the Bishop of London that my father should exchange the Bromley living for the chaplaincy at Funchal. In that favoured climate, even if the disease were not completely cured, its advance could be stayed indefinitely. My mother accordingly hastened back to England to meet the Madeira chaplain and introduce him to Bromley. Frightened at first by the immensity of the parish, he was reassured by its good condition and organization. He agreed to the exchange, so my father, resigning the holiday chaplaincy at Villeneuve which he had undertaken, came back to England. Outfits for Madeira were procured, and farewell visits were paid to the parish and people of Bromley. Then, at the very last moment, the Madeira chaplain changed his mind, and my parents found themselves homeless.

They could not possibly return to Bromley; my mother's state of health, at the moment, made the long journey to Mentone (part of it still by *diligence*) no less impossible; my father would not and could not go without her. Finally it was arranged that he should winter at Flushing in Cornwall, my mother remaining with her parents at Preston, where, on November 11th 1868, I thus happened to be born.

## CHAPTER II

### CHILDHOOD

(1868-1877)

Wanderings in Cornwall; Stratton; Dr. Temple; fancies of childhood; my father's death; life at Bude; at Preston; at Awliscombe; 'Aladdin'; first ideas of landscape; school at Budleigh and Ottery St. Mary; we move to Preston.

I WAS barely a month old when my wanderings began. It was essential that my mother should rejoin my father at the earliest moment possible. So on December 16th, four days after I had been christened in queer little pseudo-Norman Christ Church at Preston, I was conveyed to Cornwall. At Flushing, with an invalid husband and a tiny baby on her hands, my mother was fully occupied; yet all went well so long as faithful old Anne, who had been nurse to the whole Dickson tribe, remained there to look after me. But Anne was soon required at Preston, and with her recall troubles immediately started. Her place was taken by one Elizabeth Mutton, whose name I have learned to execrate. Neglected, I became fretful; then to soothe and conceal the fretfulness I was drugged. Just before it was too late the cause of the trouble was found out and dismissed, but my mother was left to watch me day and night, preparing every scrap of food, in addition to tending my father, since no reliable nurse could be had in Falmouth. At last there was discovered in Truro the good Elizabeth Simcox, to whose care I could safely be left.

Then we moved to the Lizard in search of more bracing air for my father. He soon made friends with the artists resident there, but unhappily took a chill while sketching at Mullion. Pleurisy followed, and he would have died before a doctor could be fetched from a distance but for

some prompt and homely remedies applied by my mother. When the doctor did at last arrive, he proved to be drunk. Clearly a move would have to be made promptly to some place where proper treatment was available; and in the midst of this anxiety there came a letter from Bromley to say that the curate-in-charge had broken down, and must be relieved of his duties at once.

Temporary shelter for the two invalids was offered by our Chappell cousins at Camborne; from Camborne we all moved on again to lodgings in Truro, where a capable doctor took the ailing baby in hand. My mother and father meanwhile were writing hither and thither to find a fresh curate for the Bromley Parish. A chance postscript to a letter mentioned that the vicar of Stratton in Cornwall wished to exchange it for a living in London. The income of Stratton was even smaller than that of Bromley, and uncertain too; the vicarage was shockingly out of repair, with nothing available for dilapidations; our family finance was on its last legs. But the air of Stratton promised well for the invalid, so the exchange was agreed; the vicar stipulating that the news was not to be made public. While my mother went up to London to make a final settlement there, father, nurse and baby moved to Bude, where my mother rejoined them. The following day (August 4th 1869) happening to be the anniversary of their wedding-day, my parents thought they would walk over quietly to Stratton to attend matins. The church bell was ringing as they climbed the village street, but at the top they were met by the news that the vicar had left the place, and that there was nobody to take the service. In this unexpected fashion my father restarted parochial work.

Even then, though in occupation of the living, he could not be formally instituted. The See of Exeter was vacant, and it was not until December, when Dr. Temple had been appointed, that my father became vicar *de jure*. Few episcopal appointments have aroused such an outcry. The peremptory decisions of a Rugby headmaster fell heavily

upon those accustomed to more conventional prelates, whose ways, if not *fortiter in re*, were invariably *suaviter in modo*. His reputed conversational formula, 'What d'ye want? Naow. Good marnin', reflects the opinion then current in the county; an opinion which his power, courage, honesty and judgment gradually changed to respectful affection. Our experience—I may now begin to use the first person—was invariably pleasant. From the very beginning the Bishop was a good friend to the little household at Stratton, and a welcome guest. Indeed, one of my earliest memories is connected with a visit from him, when he proved himself quite unlike the ogre of diocesan gossip.

In the early part of 1871, being little more than two years old, I was allowed, as a great treat, to sit opposite to Dr. Temple at our midday dinner. His mighty build, his dress (particularly the gaiters), and the awe with which his presence had inspired my nurse, so excited me that I was taken ill at the apple-tart stage, and was removed from the table weeping. Somewhat later, in a clean pinafore, I was allowed to come down again to the drawing-room, where, to turn my sorrows into joy, I was not only encouraged to examine and touch the fascinating gaiters, but was offered a ride round the room. Down went the Bishop on hands and knees and bore me all over the carpet, enchanted, yet a little frightened too, for my baby legs could get no proper grip on that massive back, and I had to hold on anyhow.

My second birthday is no less distinct in memory, for then, while setting out the animals from a new and sumptuous Noah's Ark (it long remained a sort of family heirloom), I fell down on top of the Red-deer. One of his horns ran into my forehead between the eyes, making a wound which covered my blue frock with blood, and left a scar that was only effaced by the wrinkles of middle age. My yells could not be quieted until our masterful doctor, John King, by arranging plaster over the wound in the form of the Union Jack, reconciled me to fortitude as being now an English soldier.

The advantages of living in the country soon became evident. It was healthy and delightful for an inquisitive little boy, and convenient for his parents, since it enabled them to be rid of him for hours together. They needed the relief. While I was just beginning to trot about the vicarage garden, to explore the field and orchard below, and to make acquaintance with the Stratton neighbourhood under my nurse's eye, my mother was far less happily occupied. Though there were short periods of improvement in my father's health, he always needed great care, and when, with the advance of the disease, his pain and weakness increased, my mother, in addition to her household and parochial duties, had to be day-nurse and night-nurse in one. Of this ever-deepening shadow in the background of life I was not wholly unconscious, but I was too young to comprehend the anxiety which so often kept the house restless and quiet. My delicacy and my inclination called for fresh air, and the privilege of rambling in the open was accorded the more liberally since it kept my noise and chatter out of the way. Even my nurse had another to think about after March 1871, when my younger brother Frank was born.

My solitary adventures began, of course, with the vicarage garden, or gardens, for the lawn and trees at one end of the house had an extension among flower-beds along all one face of it, which passed round a corner into a kitchen-garden. This was of fair size with fruit-trees trained all over the walls; sea-kale (?) growing under great mysterious inverted pots of shiny brown earthenware; and an opening to the left, flanked in those days with bushy white-grape vines, through which one descended to the moisture and shade of the orchard. To the left of the orchard was the field, equally moist, in which were held the school treats, when we drank tea out of queer mugs, and stuffed down heavy cake. Along the foot of field and orchard ran Water Lane, wherein, under an arch of greenery, a rivulet ran merrily over the squashy gravel down to Stratton and the unknown. For me that

water held some peculiar magic. It recurred for years in my dreams, glorified and enlarged at last into a veritable glassy trout-stream, so that there was some disenchantment when I revisited the place in later days to find a mere trickle, and that not over-clean.

Provided with a little garden of my own at the end of the lawn, I duly planted seeds. Some black ones with red spots were so pleasing to the eye that it was necessary to see how they would germinate. Every few days, therefore, I dug them up to note progress. There appeared to be none. When the defects of the practice were finally explained, I decided that gardening was too slow for me, and let the plot revert to weeds and dust. There were more interesting things to investigate.

Against the wall, by the carriage entrance, between two elms, which then seemed gigantic, was a heap of gravel sprawling out untidily towards the lawn. Here was a plain opportunity for virtue. Fetching my little spade and bucket, I determined to put that gravel into its place. At first I scraped from the edge, and took the bucketfuls methodically to the top of the heap. Though I persevered, it would run down again. Finally I concluded that only by speed and force could the obstinate little pebbles be coerced into piling themselves steeply up the wall. So frantically and fiercely did I shovel, that the noise at last alarmed the house. My nurse ran out to find me panting and dishevelled, with that wretched heap of gravel crumbling down again to its original objectionable form.

Another misconception led to more shameful consequences. On a visit to Bude, Mr. Dudley Mills had entertained me with some dainty little model boats, three or four inches long. The neatest of them all was made of rosewood, so I was told. There were roses in the garden at home, so I determined to make a similar little boat for myself. Selecting, therefore, the rose with the stoutest stem, I procured (how I know not) a table-knife, and managed to hack it down. The thorns pricked my fingers, but I duly trimmed the

branches, and proceeded to sharpen the two ends of the stem (it was about a foot long) into a crude resemblance to bow and stern. Only at this stage did it suddenly begin to dawn upon me that there was something radically wrong, and that by no human possibility could my miserable pointed green stick, with the bark and thorn-stubs still apparent, be transmuted into a trim little craft like the one I had seen at Bude.

These moments of doubt, disquiet, disillusion, were cut short by the tea-bell. From the corner I had chosen for the great experiment I could see guests around the flower-beds, so I slipped in by another door, dropping my dreadful product by the wall as I passed. When washed and made ready I descended to the drawing-room, to find that the talk was all about the strange destruction of some precious rose-bush, a particular favourite of my father's. I was too tiny to be suspect. But I was not at that time a liar, so promptly confessed 'I done it,' producing the contemptible evidence of my delusion and failure from the flower-bed just outside. It says much for my parents' forbearance that I escaped with a gentle scolding, and an injunction not to try such things again without asking permission. Indeed, during these years at Stratton I can remember only one occasion on which I came in for corporal punishment at my parents' hands, and that amounted only to a careful box on the ear from my father for trespassing into the one place specifically forbidden to me—his workshop. Even then I was more terrified by his sudden appearance, his long dark beard, and the feel of his wasted white hand, than I was hurt by the blow. This moderation was the more notable because I developed mischievous habits—turning on surreptitiously all the taps (taps were an endless attraction) at the wine and spirit merchant's while my nurse was giving an order, or popping my baby brother back into his bath, when he had just been got ready in muslin and ribbons to be displayed downstairs.

My parents, if I may judge from their letters, took these misdemeanours less seriously than I was apt to do myself.

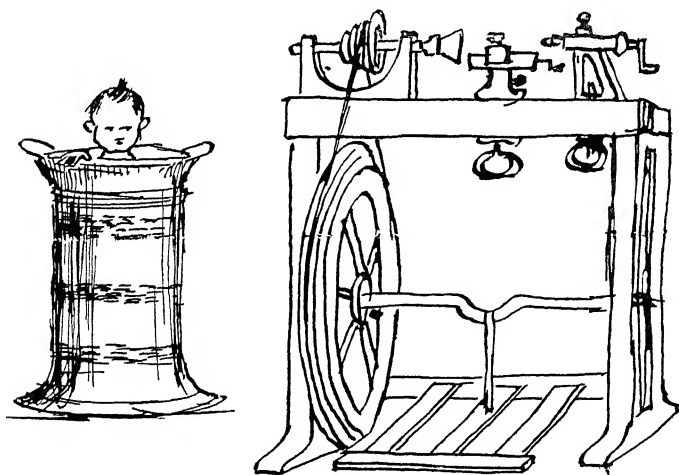


Perhaps the rigorous discipline of my father's boyhood made him resolve that his own children should have an easier start in life. I always regarded him with awe, yet my sense of his forbearing and humour deepens with every scrap of information about him that I unearth. Before I was a year old, I find him writing of me: 'Now that he can crawl anywhere he tries to get into all manner of mischief. The other day he was brought up into my workshop to be out of the way—and was highly delighted to watch me out of an empty clothes-basket into which he was popped for safety, see below.'—The appended sketch shows my head and ears projecting over the rim of the basket, the eyes bent critically upon my father's lathe, which now, more than sixty years later, is used by his grandson.

'Peter Parley' in a red cover, and some other work on life in India, were the first books (excepting the inevitable 'Agathos') which impressed me. The stories about poisonous snakes, and of crocodiles emerging from the mud to eat the natives as they slept, surrounded my nightly couch with horrors. I could not put down my feet between the sheets without a shudder lest a kerait or cobra should be there; if there was a sound by the foot of the bed, was it a crocodile come to look for me? The snake-terror lasted for some time, being emphasized by a curious incident.

My father's curate, afterwards Canon Bone, was even then a valued friend. He lived a little way off. As I was going to tea with him one day, accompanied by my nurse and little brother in the perambulator, down a lane splendid with ragged-robin, a snake appeared in the middle of the road. My faithful nurse for the moment lost her head, retreated, and left the perambulator to its fate. Picking up a stone, I cast it with the puny effort of a three-year-old, and by some curious fluke hit the unlucky creature so that it was cut into two writhing pieces. I have wondered since whether it may not have been a harmless slow-worm, dividing itself in panic. The writhing movement, however, has stayed in my head ever since, and the fright it then gave me was accentuated

he was brought up into  
my workshop to be out  
of the way - and was  
highly delighted to watch  
me out of an empty  
clothes basket into which  
he was popped for safety.  
see below :-



Isn't that a famous invention!  
Our best love  
yours affectionately  
C. F. Holmes

MYSELF IN 1869

Drawn by my father.



a few minutes later when we turned up to Mr. Bone's house, and his two black retrievers rushed out barking and jumping around us. Not even an excellent tea and new picture-books could restore my shattered courage.

One other memory of this period puzzles me still. It was a dream, of which the main features recurred and persisted for several years. The scene was invariably a rough swampy moorland under a cloudy sky. It was a billowy region of considerable extent, covered with long tufts of yellow-gray grasses, and swept perpetually by a wind which had bent and dwarfed the ragged scraps of woodland that huddled here and there by the hollows. To this moor I came again and again with singular exhilaration, as the leader who was galloping, galloping, on a shaggy, mud-coloured pony, to reach his men and lead them against the enemy for some critical fight. Both groups, they may have numbered two or three hundred in all, were mounted much as I was; their weapons, the sword or a short rough lance. The fight began with a charge on our part down a slope, continuing hand-to-hand, and without definite detail, until the enemy were swept away. That achieved, our company galloped off to the left, and apparently westward, of the direction from which I had started. In the evening we reached a rude little stone church among trees, overlooking the moor, and there, to round off the romantic adventure, I was married to somebody or other, never distinctly apprehended, but THE right person anyhow.

Like other private fancies of childhood, the whole thing seemed too sacred to talk about, as well as being too sentimental. But I have not been able to trace the source of that vivid imagery. I had seen no such northern or other moorland; I was more frightened than happy when set on a real horse, and had heard nothing of Border forays, of which the dream seemed to be a dim reflection. On my fourth birthday, it is true, my uncle Richard gave me a book 'The Adventures of St. George,' the text poor stuff, but with engravings after Gustave Doré. Here, indeed, there are

fighting knights, wild woodlands, and even a little forest chantry, yet I cannot make them fit the quite different period, *terrain*, and people of my particular romance. I suppose such fancies are common enough, and that, as in the Kipling story, some ancestral adventure may occasionally rouse a shadowy reflection in a descendant centuries afterwards, before the intimations of childhood have faded in the light of common day.

My father all this time had been growing weaker and weaker, suffering constant pain and distress which even morphia could not always relieve. My mother was almost worn out by continual attendance to his needs. In this extremity it became essential to keep me out of the house as much as possible, so I was taken down every morning, for an hour or two, to the Stratton National School. There my tendency to shirk the labour of reading for myself was promptly corrected by a box on the ear from the school-master, one which really hurt. Though this teaching lasted only a few weeks, I emerged from it with the power to spell out any simple sentence, and am glad to remember that the improvement pleased my father, for he mentions it in his last feeble pencil note. 'It is no dark sea or river that I look to, but rest, sleep and joyful resurrection' are the words with which the letter closes. A few days later (May 22nd 1873) he was released by death from sufferings which had become almost intolerable.

In due course we had to leave Stratton,—the rambling old vicarage and noble church, now in charge of Mr. Bone, who had succeeded my father as vicar; our kind friends the Kings; the Shearmes; the Rowes, with their fragrant wall-flowers and little cannon; the brothers Crutchett; Mr. Saunders the shoemaker at the foot of the hill, father of Charles Saunders the tenor; the top-hatted policeman, and many others; the over-shadowed slope above the cottage hospital, the very place, in my fancy, for the dragon to spring out upon Agathos; the turning to Binnamy where the Trewins used to give us tea and pasties, damp delicious

farm-house bread and vast red-cheeked apples,—and pass along the road to Bude with its humming telegraph poles, to Bude, which then seemed only a humble but refreshing suburb to Stratton. It lacked even a local totem. Strattonians were mice; the folk of Marhamchurch were owls; of Poughill, geese; but of Bude, nothing.

Our house in Summerleaze Terrace overlooked the little estuary and straggling town. A minute's walk to the right, or to the back, transferred us across shoe-filling sand to the open downs, then undisturbed by anything worse than a green cricket-pavilion, fragrant with the scent of the short turf and of the sea, sun-bathed, wind-swept, variegated by the passing of fair ladies with Dolly Varden hats (so my nurse told me) perched on their piled chignons, and opening out on the landward side towards a then mysterious hinterland. The path to it began among flaming, towering scarlet-runners, but branched this way and that to shady lanes, and mills with huge, mossy waterwheels, half sunk in earth (like the millstone-milestone on the direct track to Stratton) and with little visible means of subsistence in the shape of running water.

Turning downhill from the house we could soon reach the footbridge over the tidal-stream, with Cobbledick the baker's shop, and the salt mud-flats round the castle. Beyond lay the canal-bridge, the house for the lifeboat (looking as vast as a liner on its wheeled carriage), and then, to the right, the ever-fascinating walk by the canal, past the Acland's sunken house, to the tumbling sea, the breakwater and the Chapel Rock. The rock-pools were then living gardens of indescribable beauty, being as yet undiscovered and unrifled of their jewels by the devotees of that Azrael of marine zoology, Mr. Philip Gosse. To explore, slipping, splashing, and tumbling, the vales and ridges of this exquisite low-tide lakeland, was far more exciting than any building of sand castles on the opposite shore.

Possibly it was there that the existence of fish dawned upon us: the black canal hard by certainly provided the impulse

to angle for them, in the shape of a rod projecting from the deck of one of the colliers by the wharf-side. 'May *we* fish?' was the immediate demand of two little toddlers in black frocks, one of them hardly out of the perambulator stage. Pea-sticks, black cotton, bent pins, and cubes of bread as big as lumps of sugar, were produced by our resourceful nurse; tackle which even then seemed inadequate to one ungrateful recipient. It certainly failed to tempt the dace and eels in those inky deeps, and some years had to pass before the instinct to angle had a fair chance of developing.

On the hill beyond the canal, the coastguard station, known to us as 'The Storm Tower,' with the great cliffs dropping down from it, and an occasional rather terrifying and explosive practice with the rocket-apparatus, provided more lasting attractions—but not the supreme thrill. That was at Efford Down, the house of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Mills, who had been good friends to us all. The very approach to it was delightful, by low walls crowned with tamarisk, which seemed to have a faint fresh fragrance of its own if you plunged your face well into it. Enchanting too was the house itself, with the lion- and tiger-skins all over the slippery polished floors, its genial imposing owners and their sons (we were always a little afraid of Barton), who gave us the run of the place and the gardens. It was in the gardens that the magic centred—for there underground reservoirs lay hidden. Pipes and pumps connected them. After pumping vigorously for a minute or so at one pleasing and easy pump, a short run to a low door in the hillside gave access to the edge of a dark cavern below, into which a stream of water was plunging. The trouble came when it was discovered that you had thus cut off the water-supply from the house, and had, as a matter of common courtesy rather than a punishment, to pump it all back again uphill, with a much stiffer pump, and no subterranean visions to relieve the monotonous arm-work.

My father's long illness had not only impaired my mother's

health (she was never really strong again), but had also left her with grave anxieties about finance. With her customary enterprise, she set about making ends meet by taking in an invalid lady and her nurse. The lady soon proved to be a mental case; the nurse to be incompetent. My mother, in consequence, was once more loaded with a double responsibility, but her influence on the patient was so beneficial that she was encouraged to persevere. Then arose fresh complications, the issue being decided, in some measure, by the fact that I was getting out of hand. It became advisable to change our quarters, after having a good holiday with my grandparents at Preston. Permanent residence in the North, we were advised, was not yet safe for any of us, owing to the nature of my father's illness, and its possible after-consequences.

So in the summer of 1874 we came, on a visit, to Preston and to a new range of sensations. Bude had been some thirty miles from any railway; at Preston railways were an accessible, an unavoidable, attraction. Whether the trains passed in thunder over great trembling bridges, or vanished under them in spouts and billows of smoke—the very smell of it was often pleasant,—their evident irresistible momentum inspired a half-terror that was all delight. The house, too, under the rule of my gentle grandmother, whose lightest word was obeyed without question by all, held creature-comforts and surprising features which I was afterwards to know much better, but which even then were dimly apprehended. Its wise mistress saw at once that I needed some discipline, so I was presently sent off every morning to a little school. There, for a few weeks, under the stern eyes of Miss Goodwyn, and the gentler ones of her sister, I was initiated by Pinnock's little books into the mysteries of English and Roman History, learning also to do sums and to draw railway trains on a slate.

My conduct in the house was doubly regulated:—directly by old Anne, who, having brought up nine members of the previous generation, was not one to stand any nonsense



from the next; indirectly by a diplomatic promise from my grandmother that when we had been good boys for thirty days, we should each of us be given anything that we liked to ask for. My brother, being still little more than a baby, and a very good baby, earned his reward promptly. Choosing a box of soldiers, he received one about two feet square. Fired by this example, I too did my best; yet it was only at the very end of my stay, and with some allowance for minor misdeeds, that I struggled through to my great opportunity. Alas! I had recently been introduced by my uncle Edmund to the secrets of the garden and the greenhouse. Seduced by their momentary glamour, I chose—of all things—a garden-syringe.

When my mother's health had improved with rest and care, my grandmother travelled with her to Devonshire in search of another house. As they were returning in despair from one of many unsuccessful inspections, the driver of their carriage asked if they had seen Awliscombe Vicarage, near Honiton, and offered to take them there. On the road they met the vicar riding by. Introducing themselves, they found him no less accommodating in his terms than the house proved to be desirable, so the affair was settled at once. To Awliscombe Vicarage, accordingly, we came in September 1874.

It proved a delightful place for us all. A long, rambling, thatched and gabled house, between two gardens, with a third for vegetables on the hill behind, a greenhouse with excellent peaches, stables and a coach-house, a barn and pig-sties, at a rent of thirty pounds a year, were obvious merits. Others, less obvious, soon became apparent. The people round, being uniformly and exceptionally pleasant, provided my mother with congenial society. We boys, when our lessons were done, were free to run about as we pleased.

The adventures of the next twelve months made 1875 seem the longest and most eventful year in my life. One of the two spinneys in the large garden abutted on the sunken road. From it we conducted an intermittent war, by stone-

throwing, against the boys in the farm across the way. The other spinney contained much larger trees, their trunks deliciously sticky with turpentine. A small cave dug in the bank below formed our Museum, the principal treasure being a dried viper, killed by the haymakers in the grass just above. We soon learned to climb the firs, and to swing and sing in the wind at the top, overlooking the entire neighbourhood, and being all the while invisible and immune if danger threatened. Later we learned to scale even the ridge of the vicarage roof, and terrified the cook and housemaid by shouting 'Boo' down the kitchen chimney. At the back gate stood the witch's cottage. Her daughter Penelope brought the milk every day: the witch herself regaled us with dandelion wine, an astringent yellow liqueur which I have not tasted elsewhere. The little stream close by introduced us to miller's thumbs, and to experiments in aqueous engineering which proved rather costly.

Still more costly was an experiment in the art of war. One Sunday, at my Budleigh school, I heard an impressive account of the siege of Jerusalem, and of the great battering-ram by which the Romans finally breached the wall. 'At the first blow, the whole city shook.' Some fir-poles lay in the barn-yard at Awliscombe. Would they produce a similar effect? We found one which we could just lift, so trotting with it across the yard we directed the butt at the corner of the barn. Our hands got sadly jarred, but we continued the process, encouraged by the sight of a little dust which was shaken out from the mortar. A brick visibly loosened, and thenceforth progress was rapid. By the time of our midday dinner the whole corner of the barn had become a gaping hollow—a convincing proof that history was really true.

A visit to London in the winter of 1874 enlarged our knowledge of the world. For me at least, the delights of the Zoo were eclipsed by the sight of the Regent's Canal, just after the great explosion, with the shattered houses all along the banks roofed and shrouded in tarpaulin. I

remember, too, an old clergyman's story. Awakened at the dead of night by that sudden appalling shock and detonation, which unroofed buildings and blew in window-frames far away from the unlucky powder-barge, he found himself saying to his terrified wife, 'I think, my dear, it must be the Day of Judgment.'

An exquisite calves'-foot jelly at a children's party, and *Aladdin* at Drury Lane, are other memories of that visit. I already knew the *Aladdin* story, and the Houghton illustrations, so found it hard to accept as a legitimate part of it a procession of the Kings and Queens of England, even when adorned with emeralds and rubies two inches across. Nor did I think that the poisoning of the magician was conducted with proper secrecy. He might see at any moment that the huge black bottles had POISON painted upon them in vivid red. My wildest dreams, however, had conceived no such supernatural splendour as that of the transformation scenes, with the peris poised high among the jewelled lights. Pantomimes now never seem so airy and so luminous; indeed only once, in a performance of *The Magic Flute*, when the Queen of the Night suddenly appeared aloft in the starlit sky, have I caught again a little of that early rapture. Enthralling, too, was the performance of Victoria Vokes as the Princess Badroulbador, pirouetting on one toe with a grace and agility which held me spell-bound. Many a cropper did I come during the following weeks in giddy efforts to do likewise. Her spangled white and silver, though anything but Chinese, and her marvellous acrobatics did not seem inconsistent with the magnificence and magical atmosphere of the Oriental story. These, to my thinking, are marred and dissipated in modern productions of *Aladdin*, where the place of honour, year after year, is given to the widow Twankey, her mangle, and the humours of washing-day.

My first vague ideas of painting were derived from my father's sketches. Some decorated our walls, the remainder, religiously preserved in a great portfolio, were occasionally

produced to enliven a wet Sunday afternoon. In 1876, however, I was given a toy telescope, and happened to notice in the lens a reflection of the view from our dining-room window. There was the lawn, the monkey-puzzler, the greenhouse, and the banks of flowering shrubs which girdled this part of the domain. Above them rose the hill, with the old church tower among the elms, and over it a blue sky with white drifting clouds. All this was mirrored in miniature in the little circle of glass, every detail sharp and clear, every colour pure and intense. Henceforward I dreamed of a sort of painting just like that, vivid and precise, but so tiny that it could figure in an illuminated manuscript or be enclosed in a locket. But it remained a dream. I was no infant Hilliard, and could not draw even the simplest thing without ludicrous mistakes in form and proportion.

Lessons every morning with my mother had been, at first, a regular feature in our Awliscombe life. Then difficulties began, because I liked my mother's way of teaching rather too well. She had encouraged me to read for myself. The newly acquired pleasure of doing so threatened to turn me into a little library grub, an insatiable devourer of any book that might be handy. Yet when I was turned out to get fresh air there was sure to be trouble. The discipline of the village National School was tried for a few weeks, but failed entirely. So at last, though I was only six, I was sent away to a boarding-school at Budleigh Salterton.

Cliff House, where I appeared as a new boy for the fourth time, was run by Mr. Beatty and his wife. He had been a sailor and was now reading for orders. His views, if I may judge from our regular Sunday lesson-books 'Near Home' and 'Far Off,' must have been severely evangelical. He was not a bad fellow; free with the cane, but free also with diversions for us,—walks above the too fragrant beach; by the pleasant estuary of the Otter, where he could 'pot' at things with a revolver; or among the hazels, sloes and beeches on the uplands; bathing in summer at Ladram

Bay; hockey matches against the rival Woodhouse establishment and private theatricals at Christmas.

Once I really did disgrace myself. Each of us had to cultivate a small garden. In the centre of mine there sprang up a crimson-leaved plant of exceptional size. But, to my secret chagrin, one more lofty still, by a good six inches, adorned the neighbouring plot, a joint concern of two Anglo-Indian brothers about my size and age. The Cain in me was suppressed till, on one unhappy day, the brothers too openly exulted in my presence. I saw red. Falling upon them in fury, I drove the pair to retreat and to tears, and lopped their flaunting vegetable. For this I was soundly and deservedly whipped (by Mrs. B.) with a slipper; the heel (I speak with some experience) can inflict a pain which rivals in degree and duration that from a stout ground-ash.

The real trial at Budleigh was the food. To a child brought up on honest country butter, the salted substitutes for it are simply nauseous. Also, Mr. Beatty's seafaring had made him familiar with canned meat. Great gray-brown cylinders of Australian mutton were piled in the larder; their contents, equally gray and dismal, were part of our regular *menu*. At the top of the dinner-table there might be a hot appetizing joint: at the bottom, where I sat, there seemed always to be this wholesome but revolting importation. I remember sitting miserable and stupid in the dining-room with a plate of the accursed thing before me all through one long summer afternoon. The rest of the school had gone off in brakes for a picnic, and I should be (and was) whipped for disobedience when they came back—but I could not force myself to swallow it. Some hint of the trouble ultimately reached my mother's ears, for after that summer I did not return to Budleigh.

Owing to my grandfather's illness and other anxieties my mother was needed at Preston, so thither we travelled again.

A presentation to Christ's Hospital was now offered on my behalf, but was declined. My mother judged me to be too sensitive for the misunderstandings which the dress might

occasion in Devonshire, where it was quite unknown. She preferred the idea of the Clergy Orphan School at Canterbury; but election to the Foundation would take some time. Accordingly, on her return to Awliscombe, she resumed charge of her invalid lady, and so was enabled to send me, in November, to a school at Ottery St. Mary. The boys at Priory House were much bigger than any I had previously met, and during the first few weeks I got rather knocked about. But when I came back after the Christmas holiday, in January 1877, the bullies were gone, and all thenceforward went well, except for my own misdoings.

'Jacky' Frost, the headmaster, was kindly but vigorous. One of his mighty slogs at cricket caught me between the shoulders, as I stood among the spectators, knocking me headlong, and put me into the doctor's hands for some days. I can recall, too, the particular vigour with which he once spanked me for a gorgeous expedition down the riverside.

And the place itself was not unfriendly. Priory House presented its rather handsome old face to the road, and the East end of the magnificent church. The premises behind included a Jacobean portion with a haunted staircase, still stained, as the legend went and our scrutiny of the grubby boards could not disprove, with the blood of a Cavalier or a Roundhead, who had fought and died upon it.

My chief crony among the boys was named Oliver, a precocious genius, or quite phenomenal liar, possessing—if I was to believe him—a whole fleet of model battleships with guns and turrets complete, which fought mimic engagements and were reconstructed at intervals as the advances in naval science demanded. Our friendship started with a fight in which I was victorious. My other fight, with Johnny Marker, afterwards Colonel of the Coldstreams, ended less happily. Being bony and tough, he knocked me out almost at once. On the whole, however, existence at Ottery was delightfully serene. I was even making some progress at hockey, when new boots were needed. An aunt happened

to come over, took me to an Ottery shop, and compelled me to accept a pair which I knew were too tight. They proved to be so. I suffered much in the following months, and still believe that my powers of running were permanently affected by those accursed constrictors.

My headmaster, in his letters to my mother, insists, as much perhaps from policy as from charity, that my troubles were all due to thoughtlessness. Once, indeed, when walking down the main street of Ottery, I was abruptly roused from meditation by strange sounds and shadows, to find myself in the middle of the road, right under the pole of an advancing wagon between two towering cart-horses. It is no wonder that 'inattentive' is the burden of my terminal reports.

Events elsewhere now determined our stay in Devonshire. By the death of my grandmother, in the spring, the household at Preston was left without a head, my grandfather being still more or less of an invalid. My mother had been summoned North during the emergency, and it became evident that she was the only person who could take permanent charge. Our pleasant vicarage had thus to be abandoned, the furniture sold, and a move made to Lancashire. Thither I followed my mother and brother just before Christmas 1877.

The last months at Ottery were pleasant, the Fifth of November being specially memorable. In the morning we saw the town fire-brigade drenching with its hand-pump the many thatched roofs which faced the street. At night, amid the cries of 'Tar Barriel! Tar Barriel!' and the discharge of squibs and crackers, a flaming cask was rolled rumbling down the road past our gates, followed by a crowd of revellers. Jacky Frost became even more friendly than usual, professing a wish to keep me on almost any terms. But the difficulties of the long cross-country journey from Lancashire, and of declining the forthcoming election to the Canterbury Foundation, decided my mother to make an end. On the last day Jacky summoned me to his study, and gave me a

little copy of Scott's 'Marmion'—not for a prize, as he was careful to explain, but as a little memento of himself. Flodden and Fontarabia, the stubborn spearmen and the horn of Roland, were quickly found and remembered; but the giver, I fear, in the strenuous days which followed, was almost as quickly forgotten.



### CHAPTER III

## CANTERBURY AND PRESTON

(1878-1881)

The Clergy Orphan School; clothes, food and fagging; the mumps; fishing the Gudgeon Stream; the ghost in the tunnel; the house at Preston; fishing and archery; my brother Frank; Preston Grammar School; the Rev. A. B. Beaven; E. B. Osborne; Ingleborough; 'The Tarn and the Lake'; geology.

EACH of the next few years was sharply divided into two unequal periods. For ten months I was a schoolboy in the South; the remainder was holiday-time, spent in my grandfather's house at Preston. In their immediate effect upon my habit of mind, as in their duration, the schooldays were the more considerable.

In January 1878 I was taken to Canterbury by my mother. We made our way to the school doctor's house for the preliminary medical examination. A second boy and mother arrived at the same moment. The aged white-haired doctor greeted our parents, took off his spectacles, searched our polls curiously with them for a few seconds (for what?), and the inspection was over. Soon the fatal cab with mother, box, and apprehensive self was mounting St. Thomas's Hill. Half-way up the slope we passed a public-house and one or two small cottages. In front of them lounged a group of rather rough and grubby-looking boys, in queer red and black caps. My heart sank. I knew at once that I was 'for it.'

The Clergy Orphan School, known to its intimates more briefly as 'The Cos,' and bearing *Fungar vice cotis* for its punning motto, fed, clothed and educated more than a hundred and twenty boys. As with many other old foundations, the traditions of a harder age still persisted there.

All schoolboys were expected to rough it a little, and the asperities of life during the 'seventies were not peculiar to Canterbury. During the last forty years, successive headmasters, from Dr. Upcott to Canon Burnside, backed by secretaries like W. C. Cluff, and a sympathetic Committee, have changed the place beyond recognition. In comity of life and in material comfort, St. Edmund's, like its sister St. Margaret's at Bushey, is now the equal of other good public schools; an improvement reflected in its average products.

We were provided with one suit annually, an Eton jacket (Harrow type) of broadcloth, with waistcoat and trousers of gray tweed. An archaic peaked cap of black broadcloth was also furnished, but fell into disuse, I think, about 1880. Our clothes were supposed to last us for three years as 'bests,' 'seconds' and 'thirds' successively. These last, by the third year, had naturally come to be outgrown by their owners. Also, being destined for everyday use, including all games, they were soon worn out. A sewing-room patched, mended or exchanged our garments for us, but there came times when even I, never very observant of externals, was conscious of looking like a ragged street arab. To this extinction of personal pride our boots materially contributed, being of the clog-like build known, I believe, as 'Bluchers.' Since a few boys managed to keep themselves spick and span from the beginning to the end of their careers, I presume the allowance was not theoretically insufficient, but it left no margin for rapid growth, for accidents, or for very cold weather, when some of us suffered considerably.

Our dietary, so Mr. Matheson informed my mother, had been adjusted on similar scientific principles. The unvarying ration at breakfast and tea was a piece of bread, six inches long and two and a half inches square, one side of which had been moistened by a bare scrape of butter. By each plate stood a mug containing an inch or so of milk, an allowance that might be enlarged from tarnished tin jugs of hot water set at intervals along the table. Dinner varied

with the day of the week. Sunday, with veal and open tart of semi-synthetic jam, was our feast day; Wednesday's treacle-tart the supreme luxury. Thursday was a day of fasting, for the dish was resurrection-pie, not wholly unpalatable to my thinking, yet deemed to be so by custom, excepting the crust. Valiant in life as in death, and rendered desperate by hunger, old Stoddart defied the taboo, ate lustily of the forbidden thing, and then—it seemed to us a judgment—was smitten with boils.

An optional relish to the midday meal was half a mug of small beer, poured out by Rusty, the headmaster's coachman, from a vessel like an immense watering-can. I have often wondered whether such small beer, probably brewed from honest malt and hops, had not some unsuspected tonic virtue. With its discontinuance as part of everyday school-boy fare, the liability to minor nervous affections has certainly not diminished. Our surroundings might well have fostered such troubles, yet they were practically non-existent, like dyspepsia. We were always hungry, of course, so that any additional edible thing which could be bought, begged, bartered, caught, picked or stolen, was a godsend. From swedes and turnips to yew-berries and hawthorn buds, nothing came amiss. If the boys, on an average, ran rather smaller than those at other schools, the difference may not have been wholly due to a scientifically minimized diet. Many, like myself, doubtless came from parents whose health had been prematurely broken, and the majority made up in toughness for what they lacked in stature.

Shabby clothes and scanty fare were really minor evils to which a boy could soon adapt his appetite and his self-respect. Not so was the system of fagging—a quaintly simple system. Any boy became the fag of anyone else who could thrash him into obedience. I have seen old Stoddart blubbering defiance for over an hour, while being steadily beaten, *coram populo*, with a knotted rope, until he could endure no more, and consented to fag for a stronger boy. Nor was the tyrant really a bad fellow; there were many,

many worse. He had started merely to maintain his rights; to stop before he had gained his point would have been to admit defeat in public.

Being the youngest and smallest boy in the whole school, I was naturally fag to everyone, and all my little private possessions were promptly 'borrowed.' After the first shock of resentment, I became resigned and trotted on my continuous errands without protest, or much punishment, except when a job for A was cancelled or interrupted by an order from the still more powerful B. Genuine discomfort began over earth-worms. Certain ardent naturalists kept birds, young cuckoos and the like (How I hated their gaping bills!), and these needed a daily diet of worms. Worms, therefore, the weakest of us had perforce to dig for every morning in the ditch outside the playground. In the bitter March weather we developed horrid bursting chilblains, so that delving in that half-frozen clay and water, until our tale was accomplished, remains a loathsome memory.

Worse was soon to follow. Mumps broke out, and I woke in the West Dormitory, the one refuge from my round of servitude, to find my chops were sore and swollen. 'So you've got 'em, you little 'ound,' was the sympathetic greeting of Mrs. P., the school nurse, and I was packed off to share with more than a dozen boys a small room in the Infirmary. The second and outer room was allotted to seniors, persons much more to Mrs. P.'s taste. We were left severely alone. With nothing to amuse them but a few scraps of 'The Young Folks' Weekly Budget,' the larger boys fell back immediately upon M. and myself, the two weakest, to provide sport for them.

We were dogs, Toby and Carlo, kept kennelled under our beds, and set to make pellets of folded paper. At intervals, when a fresh supply of ammunition was due, we were summoned forth and made to stand open-mouthed as targets for the rest, armed with miniature catapults. This amusement palling (we soon got used to the confinement and the sting), others more painful were devised. One brute, T.,

used to set us up on a washhand-stand, and then see how far his heavy fist could hit us on to the bed behind. B., more ingeniously, would make us crawl out backwards from our kennels, and then return us with a dexterous kick; he played football for the school. So far had we fallen from all human standards, that I was genuinely amazed when, on the tenth day, the grim Stephenson, who had once laid out a farm labourer in a stone fight, entered at dinner-time from the outer room, to see that our portions of a quite unexpected and appetizing Irish stew were not taken away from us. At the time I did not recognize the possible connexion of that strange luxury and mansuetude with a visit, the same afternoon, from a doctor. Thank goodness! He let me out.

The experience, brief though it was, left several lasting scars on my temper. I learned to hate T., and in a less degree B., with a fury which smouldered for years. I learned what it was to be helpless—so helpless that, when stricken by subsequent catastrophes, I have always been able to console myself by recalling this period, in which my fortunes had sunk to their absolute nadir. There seemed no way of escape from this unhappy order of things as established by grown-up authority. Any appeal, protest or complaint would have been quite futile. Boys might run away from the school, sometimes getting as far as London, but they were invariably and ignominiously recaptured.

As I reflected, like Robinson Crusoe, upon my melancholy condition, childish logic suddenly perceived that there might be limits, after all, to non-resistance. Having suffered so much, I could not suffer very much more even if, with due regard, of course, to the strength of the oppressor, I sometimes hit back. A suitable test soon presented itself in the person of one not much older or stronger than myself. As he coerced me to some distasteful end, I noticed that a form stood close behind him. Emboldened by the strategic advantage I hit him in the face with all my puny force. Over the form, naturally, he toppled, was too surprised to retaliate effectively, and finally developed a black eye, for

my encouragement, and for a warning to similar small fry. But my career as a bruiser was a chequered one. The boys in my form were mostly much older and bigger than myself, and I won no victories there. Yet to be knocked down, especially on grass, by a swinging blow from someone whom you have already marked, is much less painful than it sounds, and gives time for recovering the breath.

Hardened by these exercises, and having acquired by practice a respectable force and precision in stone-throwing, I now began to pass muster with my coevals. Like them I learned, at the price of many snufflings and chilblains, to endure cold—since top-coats were not worn even in the depth of winter—and to take my share of the knocks which come to small boys who have to join in violent games with big ones. To be tossed in a blanket, even to the top of a high schoolroom, is much less of an ordeal, as I can testify, than its reputation suggests—unless the blanket splits. Discipline in general was vigorous if erratic, minor misdemeanours being punished daily by the captain of the school with a stout ground-ash or a cricket-stump;—and when the captain was some mighty cricketer like W. N. Roe, each stroke left a lasting impression. Nevertheless small boys, displaying no notable proficiency in games, could often scuttle off, after roll-call on a half-holiday, to range the countryside undisturbed.

Only at a somewhat later date did I become conscious of the beauty of these Kentish woodlands in the spring, carpeted with flowers, fretted above with sprouting buds against the blue sky, and so altogether glorious that one burst into uncouth carolling—when out of earshot. Bird's-nesting was the common objective. Mine was the trickle of water beyond the Gudgeon Wood, known, *lucus a non lucendo*, as the Gudgeon Stream. Where it flowed in the sunlit open towards the culvert under the Whitstable Railway it contained only loaches and miller's thumbs. Above, it ran under thickets like a miniature trout-stream, alternate hollow pool and rapid shallow. The pools, often nearly

two feet deep, could be fished with a hazel rod, stout cotton, a roach hook or even a bent pin, a small worm, and a fragment of cork for float. The quarry consisted chiefly of minnows, so vigorous, so large and so different from the minnows previously known to me, that I long believed them to be the Fordidge trout of Izaak Walton. A dozen and a half counted as a good basket, and made a not unsavoury mess when cooked over the lavatory gas in the dripping used for greasing footballs.

This enchanting sport had its perils, being regarded as poaching or trespassing by the 'knaves' of the adjoining farms, and mercilessly punished. So, when crouched in the little channel, well under the bushes, I have watched with anxiety my fellow-angler, the agile Bunny Williams, discovered, chased on to the plough by the huge limbs of young Moses, the most active of the knaves, and nearly caught because his superior pace availed him little among the clods. The same indefatigable hunter spied us a little later in a field not far from the school, and as we ran from him my bootlace broke, the boot worked off, and I fell behind. The enemy gripped me with one great paw: the other, to my terror, held a sickle. Satisfied with one victim, he called out 'Ye can sta-art!' to Williams, who had stopped on seeing the capture. Instead of making off, that sturdy friend, coming nearer, assailed young Moses with a fire of satirical personalities which made him pause. The aspersions on his appearance and physical powers had at first no effect. 'Ye can sta-art,' he repeated stubbornly. But some reference to his legs proved too much for him. Flinging me to the ground, he rushed at his tormentor, who drew him away over the grass, dodging him with so much dexterity that in watching the scene I forgot my own danger. A cry of 'Run, you little fool!' recalled my straying senses, and gathering up my useless boot, I reached the road in safety, where my liberator soon joined me.

Near the Gudgeon Stream I met with an adventure more dangerous and more curious. Before the branch line from

Canterbury to Whitstable reaches the culvert, it passes through a long, old-fashioned tunnel. To walk through this tunnel was held to be a daring feat, for it was narrow, was reputed to have only one manhole in the wall some five hundred yards from each end, and emergence on the Canterbury side might land the pioneer in the midst of hostile railwaymen. With a friend, 'Widow' Thorpe, I set out one day to attempt the passage. Only one train ran to and fro on the single line; so after watching this enter the tunnel on its way to Canterbury, we followed confidently in its wake. The roar of the train died away before us, but the tunnel was still obscured by the eddying smoke. We had advanced nearly five hundred yards, and were feeling for the manhole by keeping our sticks against the wall, when we were brought to a halt by the appearance of what looked like a tall gray figure standing on the track. Was it a workman who had walked out of the manhole; or was it merely a pillar of eddying smoke? I had much the keener vision of the two, and still believe it to have been the latter. So disquieting nevertheless was the phenomenon, that we decided after a short consultation to postpone our venture, and run back the way we had come. Being a well-known sprinter, the Widow set a pace over the sleepers which I could not maintain. Panting after him, I became aware of a sound behind me which grew in a few moments into the unmistakable rattle and roar of an advancing locomotive. The race begun half in jest was continued in frantic terror. Fear lent me wings; indeed there was not a second to spare. As we reached daylight and flung ourselves exhausted on the ballast by the tunnel's mouth, an engine rushed out above us on its way to Whitstable. Evidently it had been waiting in a siding at the far side of the tunnel for the train to pass, and it must have caught us but for that menacing wraith. We thenceforward, and others for the time, left the tunnel to itself.

Self-protection at first so engaged my thoughts that few remained available for my lessons. This incapacity, or



indifference, moreover did not vanish with the shrinking of its cause, but turned to simple idleness. Much more openly contemptuous of books was an older school-fellow who, having an unusual allowance of pocket-money, fared sumptuously among us. Leaving the school, he returned as an Old Boy, natty and cheerful as ever, but—an assistant in Marshall and Snelgrove's. I had given little thought to the future, yet such a career fell so far below any way of life I had conceived for myself, and was such a contrast to M.'s prosperous independence while he was with us, that it seemed a judgment upon idleness. Fifty years ago the professional classes looked upon retail trade as something lying outside the social pale, and I was too immature, and too conventional by nature, not to be infected by the prejudice. At the moment it did me good service, for, in the fright occasioned by my snobbery, I took to my books again.

Fiction being a necessity in the long winter evenings, it was politic to bring from home at least one paper-backed novel. When read, this could be exchanged for another, and so would circulate until, hopelessly dog's-eared and tattered, it finally fell to pieces. Oddly enough, 'Jane Eyre' and 'Wuthering Heights' moved me more than Dickens, Scott or Thackeray;—I could never forgive Esmond for marrying Lady Castlewood. But the description of Lowood School, poignantly recalling my own discomforts, induced a pleasant mood of sentimental self-pity; the dream-ghost of Catherine at the window thrilled me as even 'The Black Cat' and 'The Fall of the House of Usher' did not. They were too 'steep.' Who would really build a family mansion on the edge of a tarn?

Since our Easter holidays lasted little longer than a week, I generally had to spend them at the school—a great opportunity for exploration—but at Midsummer and Christmas I went to my grandfather's house in Lancashire. Since this became my home for some twelve years, and had much influence over my mental outlook, I may be forgiven if I describe it briefly.

The plateau upon which Proud Preston is built descends somewhat abruptly at its southern and western edges to the fields bordering the Ribble. The southern slope is laid out with unusual taste as a public park: the adjoining slope to the west is occupied by a series of private houses. Here in 1838 my great-uncle William Dickson had designed and built a joint residence for my grandfather and himself. The eastern front along the road to the park showed a pair of semi-detached houses, of excellent brickwork with portals of sandstone, simple, but quite finely cut and proportioned. The more southern of the two houses was my grandfather's, and was then numbered 33.

The outlook eastward was typical Lancashire; past blackened elms and a little field to the high wall of the railway goods-yard and ever-shunting wagons. The surprise came when one passed the airy hall, effectively lighted by a tall staircase window, and had reached the rooms on the west. The bank behind the house dropped so suddenly that the ground-floor was now carried aloft upon a row of arches. These supported a broad verandah, running for fifty yards or more along the entire front of the joint building, floored with cleanly lead, the rails and trellised pillars half-hidden under climbing pear-trees. Upon this sunny elevated promenade the windows of drawing-room and dining-room opened, with a view over trees, gardens, fields and river to the wooded slopes of Penwortham, a mile away. The white cottage of our gardener-coachman in the middle distance was the single building then visible. Later came a railway embankment, and now the last vestiges of nature are buried by street upon street of little houses.

The quarters allotted to my brother and myself in this establishment were the day and night nurseries. Here the amateur architect had gone astray. Not only had he made the rooms too low, so that the ceilings in places sloped to within three feet of the floor, but the single approach to the whole top storey was by a dark, narrow, creaking stair with a nasty twist at the bottom. Great cisterns collected the

rain-water from the roof by covered conduits, providing delightful channels for sailing-boats in wet weather. A big cupboard contained my uncle Herbert's naval sword, and the more ponderous sabre of a Buck cousin who had fought at Waterloo: invaluable weapons when searching under the beds for a robber. Just across the stairs lay the museum-laboratory of my uncle Edmund, crammed with his geological collections and scientific paraphernalia. His tools and lathe, to which my father's made a welcome addition, were housed far below in a big dim cellar, in which we somehow managed to practise carpentry and engineering untroubled by the perpetual twilight.

From the garden, the house, with its long arcade and verandah, made quite an imposing spectacle. The gardens themselves were so diversified by irregular contours, trees, shrubs, hedges, greenhouses, flowers and vegetables as to seem more extensive than they were. In two long fields below, sheep, at times, provided excellent hunting; a tennis-court less irregular pursuits. Three small springs flowed out along the edge where slope and level merged, the largest of them in its ditch-wise passage to the river affording cover for water-rats, eels and sticklebacks. Altogether a Land of Promise for two small boys, left very much to themselves in a household of grown-ups.

Illness had curtailed my grandfather's power of walking, without affecting his ability as a solicitor. Under him, with two married brothers, worked my uncle Edmund; more from duty than inclination, his thoughts being all for science. His cheerful and strenuous junior, my uncle Arthur, was training as a land-agent. Social and housekeeping duties occupied my mother and her young sister, Adela. So long as the two small boys, the last and least in the household, refrained from doings which impinged beyond concealment upon their elders in their several orbits, they could play as they pleased.

I cannot recall the period without regretting much that happened. Canterbury had taught me to fight for myself;

my brother's gentle temper made it easy to play the tyrant. The home-bred boy stands a poor chance when matched against the product of a rough boarding-school, who is also the older and stronger of the pair. I was far too deeply attached to my brother Frank to become a regular bully, but was too often selfish, hasty and overbearing. Nevertheless, though sparring continually, we had great fun together. Battles with tin soldiers delighted us for years, even working at model boats, steam engines and the lathe could not displace them in favour.

Among outdoor sports fishing came first. The passion was roused, or revived, by a walk in the park near the old Tram Bridge over the Ribble. Just below it we saw a long green and white cork float slowly pulled under the water; when it was pulled out an eel followed it. Who could resist this appearance of a strange thing from the unknown deep? Having procured lance-wood rods (1s. 6d.) from the Fishergate gunsmith, we were introduced by a friend to catching roach in a pond, and then to grander quarry. A day on the Brock with my uncle Edmund brought me my first trout, so happily proportioned that he could be borne home in a bottle, and housed in the sunken trough by the tennis-lawn. Fortunately the spring that fed this receptacle harboured water-shrimps, so the trout lived there for several years, until a huge flood sweeping up to the garden foot restored him to liberty.

The great ponds at Messrs. Swainson and Birley's mills provided fiercer joys. It was a strange place to go a-fishing among mighty buildings tremulous and humming with machinery, massive beam engines, tall chimneys belching smoke, a labyrinth of hot-water conduits and high palings, black paths and coarse herbage. Steam drifted off and over the tepid 'lodges'; the lubricating oil which came into them from the engines fattened hundreds of carp, running up to four pounds or more, and some large black eels. From dough stiffened with cotton-wool we advanced to genuine bread paste as a standard bait; sometimes bread alone

would serve. If a fair-sized piece of bread were thrown into the water on a calm day, it would slowly disintegrate, and thereby attract fish to the surface until the water seethed with their rises and gobblings. A cube of bread cast like a fly towards the focus of excitement would then be seized, and seldom by a small fish. The carp fought splendidly, so that the sport in these odd surroundings surpassed any that we found elsewhere. Tench vaster still could be seen sailing among the water-lilies in a pond at Penwortham Hall: but only once in many days' fishing did one bite at a worm, and that bite was missed. We surveyed much of the country round, testing pond after pond, only to catch small perch, roach or eels; occasionally nothing at all, as when, in our innocence, we spent an afternoon harrying the poisonous waters of the Darwen.

Archery was the rival sport. My mother passed over to us her bow, a delightful 38-pounder, and a green morocco sheath of the most perfect arrows I ever saw. To these dainty relics of her early prowess we were further attracted by the idea of emulating the mediaeval bowmen. But alas! instead of 400 yards we found our range was about 150, and no more than 100 for reasonable accuracy. Cheap arrows proved too unsteady in flight for serious purposes. Even the perfectly finished and balanced rarities from the maternal quiver flew with just so much undulation as to make the hitting of a horizontal mark, like a fence rail, a matter of chance. But with an upright stick it was different. The arrow kept to a vertical course so faithfully that the legends of Little John and the rest of them hitting a peeled willow became quite credible. Even I could splinter a broom handle, or the like, at 25 or 30 yards. The precious arrows in time were reduced to three in number, and my vanity led to the loss of another. A sceptical visitor challenged me with the offer of half-a-crown to hit, first shot, a bottle placed on a post at the far end of the tennis-lawn. These ordeals needed some force; I shot hard; the bottle, a small black beer-bottle, rang and toppled, but the arrow, alas! was

splintered into fragments. It was an expensive half-crown, for those perfect arrows of the 'fifties could not be replaced.

Then one of the two survivors pitched, by some mischance, on the roof of the house, rattling down into the gutter where even the longest ladder could never reach it owing to the projection of the verandah. Nor could it be dislodged with a fishing-rod from a skylight. Nothing remained but a crawl down the slates. I managed to traverse the sloping diagonal, head-first on my stomach, reached the gutter and pitched the sacred arrow to safety on the gravel fifty feet below. Then, and only then, did I discover, to my horror, that I could not turn to crawl back without rolling over the edge. There I stuck, utterly terrified. I could not bring myself to send my brother for help: that would involve his contempt, and both of us in the wrath of our elders. So inch by inch I began to push myself backwards up that ghastly slope. A feat which a trained climber could have performed with ease in a couple of minutes took me twenty, or so it seemed, and as I made the diagonal traverse to the skylight, and was seized by the boot, and helped to safety, I vowed that not for a dozen arrows would I be such an idiot again. The acquisition of an air-gun shortly afterwards put an end to the need for any further follies of that sort.

My brother, for all his gentleness, had the greater courage of the two. It was he who dared me to jump from the ten-foot platform at the deep end of the swimming-baths, and set the example. It was he who tried the creaking ice on the black tarn above Scorton, and discovered that it would bear, when all the low-lying waters would not, and so gave us five days of perfect and undisturbed skating. It was he who first ventured out on the top of the walls separating the deep 'lodges' at New Hall Lane, to reach the currents in which the carp bit most freely. It was he who led the way, after we had climbed the rusty fire-escape up the side of one of those big cotton-mills, to walk along the coping of the roof. The unexpected bird's-eye vista of mill-ponds, roofs, and

solemn chimney-shafts seen from that coping gave me, I think, my very first glimpse of the spacious de-humanized grandeur such industrial panoramas might display. It dominated my dreams for some years, and a picture of *Seven Chimneys* painted thirty years later is based upon that childish memory. The picture now belongs to the Eton friend, T. B. Lewis, who commissioned my most ambitious essay in this type of painting—the series of Blackburn landscapes at Samlesbury Hall.

Our liberty to seek external adventure was accompanied by domestic comforts which made an almost ludicrous contrast to the spartan life at Canterbury. The house was warm and spacious; the servants all friendly and efficient. Kate, the tall, slender, gentle under-housemaid, had the charge of us. The daughter of one of my grandfather's tenants, she had a sporting spirit, rescuing us from trouble when she could, and if attacked with pillows, capable of dealing a swashing blow before which all opposition went headlong. The food also was excellent, for my grandfather had the instincts of a *bon viveur*, by which we profited. Even before we reached the dignity of admission to dinner-parties, an occasional glass of port or sherry was permitted, but neither, to my mind, had the distinction of an ancient cowslip wine, made from some recipe of my grandmother's. This golden liqueur, for it was a potent syrup rather than a wine, had a subtle character and a flower-like fragrance worthy of much greater fame. I suppose the making of it is now a lost art, like the secret of a certain standard luncheon-dish of minced veal, or was a personal gift, like the making of oat-cakes, milk-cakes and other toasted-and-buttered delicacies of the North-country.

Family portraits, from the seventeenth century onwards, some fine old furniture, much old silver and china, blended not inharmoniously with Victorian flock-paper, prismatic chandeliers and solid mahogany. The 'Standard,' 'Cornhill Magazine' and 'Illustrated London News' kept us in touch with the world; the bound volumes of the last, from its

commencement, with the cartoons from 'Punch,' introduced us to recent history and politics. In that Conservative household all that was evil, except personal immorality, was represented by Joseph Chamberlain. The religious bias was equally, and more oppressively, definite. It was quite a pleasant shock to hear an uncle quote, with unholy delight, a phrase he had caught at some meeting: 'The sweetest word that ever was breathed—Protestantism.'

On Sunday freedom ceased. Morning and evening in our best clothes, with the hateful addition of gloves, we accompanied our elders to the square family pew in Christ Church, to contemplate over its high panels the memorial tablet to the Rev. Carus Wilson (the Mr. Brocklehurst of Jane Eyre's 'Lowood'?), to work out mental calculations based on the Dominical or Sunday letter, and to have an open eye for any other distraction. The friendly vicar, our neighbour Mr. Firth, interested us less than the headmaster of the Preston Grammar School, the Rev. Alfred Beaven Beaven. Once, it was rumoured, he had preached. But he had started his sermon with the phrase 'seated in your pews like stalled oxen,' and the simile had proved too much for a prosperous middle-class congregation. His help thenceforth was confined to reading the Lessons. With his dark beard, beetling brow, eyeglass screwed tight into his right eye, and his reputation for flogging, Mr. Beaven was a memorable figure as he poised himself two yards back from the lectern and turned the doings of Elijah and Ahab into dramatic reality. He had indeed something of the look and temper of a minatory prophet, coloured by the disdain of a scholar for the stolid citizens among whom his lot was cast. I did not guess how soon I should come to know him.

In January 1880 my charming and spirited aunt Adela, whose coming of age had been celebrated a month earlier, developed scarlet fever in a form so virulent that recovery was seen to be hopeless from the first. My brother and I were packed off at once to an uncle's, but the Canterbury regulations, scrupulous on this point, forbade my return



thither. Preston Grammar School proved less exacting, so there I was sent for six months as a boarder with the dreaded Mr. Beaven.

His official residence, Avenham House, had been designed to accommodate some forty boys, or more. It now maintained less than a dozen. The increasing number of public schools, and the social status they were supposed to confer, were everywhere depriving the local grammar schools of their well-to-do middle-class patronage. Preston too had, at the moment, to face competition with a neighbouring grammar school, reputed to be less strenuous, more comfortable, and therefore more attractive to soft heads, soft bodies and soft maternal hearts. Personally I found little to complain about. Compared with Canterbury, the food, the quarters and the company seemed quite civilized. Though kept strictly in my place, being once more the youngest among the boarders, I found the others to be friendly and tolerant, when once they had cured my selfish or self-defensive attitude by ridicule. Of the town boys, about a hundred in number, we saw very little except in class. I fought, of course, with several, and had a nodding acquaintance with many, but our interests really lay apart. There were no organized games, and the ramshackle premises afforded little inducement or opportunities for other recreation. An inexhaustible supply of fiction, however, could be borrowed from the Harris Free Library, at our very door, to animate such intervals as were not required for work.

Our headmaster did not allow those intervals to be many or lengthy. Himself a classical scholar caught up by the movement which was sweeping away the old classical system, he devoted every thought not required by his zeal for Disraelian Conservatism to the Oxford Local Examinations. Year after year the school triumphed over its fellows in that competition; but the price of success proved in the end to be too heavy, for it entailed a strain upon the endurance of the boys which was more than tender-hearted parents could stand. Industry and discipline were enforced by the

cane. In his boarding-house and in playful moments, Mr. Beaven preferred the paper-knife, which he wielded with the skill of an adept. To catch us pillow-fighting, when the person was protected by nothing more than a nightshirt, gave him particular satisfaction.

Being forewarned, I took care at the entrance examination to make no display of erudition, thereby just escaping the Oxford Locals, to the headmaster's subsequent regret. His assistant masters were practised boy-drivers, but in the obscurity of the Third Form I could evade the ferocious humour of Maddox over simple Caesar and Xenophon, and establish quite friendly relations with his gentler colleague Pugh. The acid comments of Atkinson I escaped altogether, since I had not to 'take' Chemistry. But our French and Mathematics were in charge of the grim Osborne, and from him there was no escape. A martinet with a sense of humour, showing little mercy to stupidity and none to idleness, Osborne made it his business to see that the set work was really done by everyone under him. Such teachers make the reputation of a school, but from concentration upon their daily routine, seldom acquire the social connexions which qualify a man for the plums of the profession. So it was then with Osborne; yet, with the possible exception of Edmond Warre, I owe more to him than to any other of my many masters.

His methods in the mathematical class were simple. We began school by standing in a large crescent facing the blackboard. Osborne walked behind us, cane in hand, receiving from each in turn his exercise of ten sums or problems worked out in a book. Glancing at them, he read out, 'Number one; right. Number two; wrong.' Whack, went the cane. 'Number three; wrong.' Whack, once more, and so to the painful end, which in my case was apt to be 'The whole dirty and untidy,' Whack, Whack: and they were no gentle cuts. The effect, however, was magical. I came to him indolent, inaccurate, slovenly. The thwackings promptly discredited indolence, more slowly disciplined

inaccuracy, and warred so vigorously with my natural untidy habits, that I rose finally to the third place in that well-seasoned company. Further advance was impossible; Shaw, at the top, was never known to make a mistake. The second boy had an equally perfect record, until one day Osborne announced with genuine surprise, 'Foxcroft; your ninth sum is *wrong!*', and laid the cane softly upon his shoulder, like a respectful *accolade*.

Over French I got into more serious trouble. The exercises and passages set for translation were really too long for boys who, like myself, had no natural gift for languages, and I soon found myself condemned to write out and translate several pages of a book. I did so, somewhat perfunctorily, in true *poena* fashion, skipping a tough sentence here and there. When I handed in the scribbled sheets, Osborne asked me if I had done it all. I answered 'Yes.' Two days later my scrawl, with the omissions neatly annotated by him in red ink, was passed on to the headmaster. That famous expert with the rod forthwith decreed ten cuts of the cane for lying. Duly extended over a desk, I endured six; then the agony became unbearable. I turned and said that if he would spare me the remaining four I would give him my word never to tell a lie again. 'That hardly bears, I fear, on the present case,' said Mr. Beaven, with something like a chuckle. 'Go down again.' So down I went, to emerge weeping and sore, but consoling myself with the thought that I had escaped being committed irrevocably to telling the truth.

Two holiday events stand out from the rest. At Whitsuntide, my grandfather, after describing the Ingleborough country where he had spent part of his boyhood, said that we ought to see it, and produced two half-sovereigns for the excursion. Starting by a very early train we duly reached Settle, but the walk thence to Clapham Caves, along dusty roads in a hot sun, seemed far longer than it looked on the ordnance map. We were only eleven and nine respectively. A clamber through the then undamaged caves (the flood

which ruined the Giants' Hall occurred in the following August), with a guide and guttering candle-stumps, restored our spirits; the dark ravine of Troll Gill filled us with awe, the unknown depths of Gaping Gill Hole with curiosity; patches of grubby snow on the north face of the hill provided unexpected snowballs, while to stand in the wind on the summit of Ingleborough was like conquering the Matterhorn. The descent westward upset all our calculations. Our legs were too short for skipping the limestone ridges, and we arrived at Ingleton breathless, only to see the tail lamps of our train receding. It was two in the morning before we got home by some roundabout route, chilly, stiff and empty, but confirmed mountaineers thenceforth.

The second experience was a visit in the summer to the Pedders at Finsthwaite near the foot of Windermere. The delights of it are already recorded in 'The Tarn and the Lake'; the essence of them was the blend of fishing with clear air, clear water and variegated mountain scenery;—a combination unknown to industrial Lancashire, and which, even though the actual sport be meagre, still seems to me the finest combination in the world. I had not, however, the least inclination to express these feelings in any form of art; it was to science that my attention was overwhelmingly attracted.

My uncle Edmund had devoted every moment which he could spare from his work as a solicitor to gardening, botany, geology, chemistry and electricity. Certain events now involved him in a scheme for the scientific education of working men, with Geology for his special subject. He conceived an ambitious course of lectures, which eventually would cover all the aspects of that science, physical and stratigraphical, petrological and biological, with the preparation of a detailed syllabus to serve as hand-book. He had previously admitted us, on occasion, to electrical and chemical demonstrations. He now enrolled me as a totally unauthorized assistant for his geological scheme. Every evening, after family prayers at ten o'clock, I was supposed

to go to bed. I duly went upstairs, but, allowing an interval for the house to settle down, slipped across to my uncle's room, and worked with him there till midnight. His library, and his really fine collection of specimen rocks and fossils, soon made me familiar with the outlines of the science: at night, with microscope and polariscope, I learned to distinguish between minerals, and to puzzle over problems like *Eozoon Canadense*. Excursions to promising quarries with the learned and dignified vicar of Hoghton, the Rev. Jonathan Shortt, and a stout tobacconist of exceptional scientific insight, taught me something of the practical side of the business.

Eighteen months later I had the subject so well in hand that I consulted my uncles Edmund and Arthur as to whether it might not be possible to adopt Geology as a profession. Mining and its exploratory processes were then in their infancy; the openings for geological teachers were few and ill-paid. One of the finest geologists known to my consultants received only £200 a year for his Professorship. It would be safer to follow the ordinary routine. Accordingly, when the great syllabus was finished and in print, I had to let Geology drop: not without regret. Never before had any sort of knowledge come to me so easily, or excited so much pleasurable speculation as to cause and effect. Indeed, as the cane of Osborne had impressed upon me the disadvantages of being inaccurate, so the enthusiasm of my uncle Edmund aroused and stimulated a spirit of inquiry which became a habit.

CHAPTER IV  
CANTERBURY AND ETON  
(1881-1884)

Canterbury after the epidemic; a great schoolboy; the snow-storm of 1881; impressions at Windsor; a scholarship at Eton; cursed by Ruskin; College at Eton; discipline and idleness; the Wall Game; 'Eton as She is Not'; ragging and its consequences; a rebellion.

ON returning to Canterbury in September 1880, I found the school strangely subdued and chastened. During my absence in the spring, an epidemic of measles had broken out with which the nursing equipment and accommodation were naturally quite unable to cope. In the crowded infirmary more than forty boys at one time lay seriously ill, of whom three, including Harrison, my particular friend, had died. The spectacle of a distracted mother stretched weeping, on the bare floor, by the body of her only son, touched many who were familiarized with ordinary hardships, and survived as a legend to strengthen the arguments of those who in after years were to bring about a reform.

One small mitigation of my hungry life was secured by gaining admission to the 'Special' drawing class, with a greasy laborious copy of a lithographed sheep. I aspired to no such expert skill as that of the son of Eber, well known later as Fred Mayor; but the 'Specials' were given a piece of bread to rub out with, instead of india-rubber, and such an edible was worth an effort. A more substantial mitigation soon became visible in the distance. The mathematical accuracy I had so painfully acquired at Preston quickly attracted notice, leading first to promotion and the Fifth Form, then, in the following summer, to particular notice from Archbishop Tait as 'a very little boy to get so many

prizes.' From the Fifth Form, as from Pisgah, the Sixth Form could be plainly seen;—a land of tea and coffee, of bread and cheese and beer for supper, not to mention the comparative seclusion of the class-room, and the right to explore its bookshelves.

The desert which separated us from that Promised Land was formed by the 'Odes' of Horace. The seeker for admission had to learn them by heart, book after book, and pass an examination in them aided by memory alone. I was always miserably slow at learning by heart, so Spring, Summer and Autumn went by, while I wandered about with a Horace in my pocket, devoting every free moment to a task which seemed interminable. In the end I scraped through, enough of the hardly mastered verse remaining in my head to give me afterwards a repute as a Horatian scholar which was quite fallacious. At the time the result was to plunge me into a wholly new environment. I became once more a little boy among big ones, being thirteen while the majority were sixteen, seventeen or eighteen.

Two figures dominated the rest; one of them, the most remarkable schoolboy I ever met. Walton Emerson Cornwall (Emerson was a relative, I believe), known from a mutilated right hand as 'Nipper One-Thumb,' was Captain of the school, and of the cricket and football teams. Strong, square, upright, rigorous, inflexible, he seemed to infuse the discipline of ancient Rome into all that he undertook. Like Osborne, he believed in the rod, and the company that he drilled learned to manoeuvre like guardsmen to the thwack of his ground-ash. Cornwall was no natural cricketer, but he compelled the Eleven to practise as they had never practised before, particularly at fielding, so that his Captaincy was an almost unbroken series of victories. He had more real authority than any master, daring even, on the last day of the term, to punish some rowdiness by ordering the whole school, from the Fifth Form downwards, to stand in line in the big schoolroom, at attention and in absolute silence, for one full hour, while he sat

at a table on the dais, quietly working with text and lexicon.

So deeply did his character impress me that I always looked forward to meeting Cornwall again, in some station of life proportionate to his merits. That meeting fortune did not permit. On leaving Oxford, Cornwall achieved conspicuous administrative and social success in Australia, having entirely thrown off, it would seem, his primal austerity. After some years, on returning for a vacation in Europe, he was taken ill at Rome, where he died. Rome was indeed his spiritual city, but it was hard that he should come to her only to join the more famous 'inheritors of unfulfilled renown' who are buried by the Ostian Gate.

Cornwall may have loved order and authority rather too much; Helby, the second prominent figure in the classroom, went to the opposite extreme, being as impatient and violent as the other was self-controlled. An excellent bowler, his physical strength enabled him to throw the cricket-ball more than 100 yards at the age of sixteen, and his reckless use of missiles, whether in anger or horse-play, made him dangerous company. Cornwall alone could keep him in some sort of order; when Cornwall left, the small fry were at his mercy. He was no deliberate bully, merely a constant peril, especially when warmed with a little beer. He nearly killed me once by throwing a big jam-jar at my head; but I did not remember how much I had feared his rages till a dozen years later. I was then a respectable publisher, attending a Festival Service in St. Paul's, when his familiar figure strode up the centre aisle, defiant as ever. The sight was too much for me. Slipping quietly to one side, I tiptoed back to safety and Ludgate Hill.

Over all the assistant masters at this period—a pleasant group, including as a junior that trusty friend of the school Mr. H. G. Watson—the tall figure of E. H. Oldham towered. He could play football, he could bat, he could bowl and he could catch the great, shy trout of the Stour. One feat of his I am glad to have seen. He was asked one day to throw



the cricket-ball. A sunken kerbstone marked the hundred yards limit, but Oldham's throw, soaring far above it, hit the wall of the school near the porch, some fifteen yards beyond, and hit it three or four feet from the ground. 117 yards was thus a fair estimate for this casual trial; only two yards less than the throw of Bonnor, the giant Australian. The memory of that soaring ball makes me envy those who witnessed the throw of 136 yards by Forbes, the Etonian, which was not believed in until it had been surpassed.

The zeal of the school for cricket was enhanced by the performance of W. N. Roe, the late Captain, in making 415 not out at Cambridge, a record at the time. It extended even to the Second Eleven, which in J. E. Dennis and Gordon Cumming possessed two youthful bowlers who swept all before them in a sequence of almost ludicrous victories. These I came to attend in the capacity of umpire, and of such visits paid to the outer world in connexion with cricket, none was so memorable as a match at Chilham Castle. There Colonel Harvey made us free of the grounds, and those who were not actively engaged on the cricket-pitch could fish in the lake. This remarkable sheet of water, fed by springs from the chalk and milky-white with suspended lime, contained quantities of roach, some of considerable size, providing a pleasant change from any other fishing I could get. The Stour we might not attempt; the Gudgeon Stream, though I got one fair-sized eel from it, had lost its novelty, and the tench which I discovered in the Butcher's Pond were more unexpected than exciting.

The great snowstorm of 1881 caught me at the end of a visit to my uncle Richard at Windsor. I had been duly impressed by the splendours of the Castle, and of the Library with its famous view of Eton across the river, but by nothing so profoundly as by the service in St. George's Chapel. To occupy one of those canopied stalls, encrusted with heraldic memorials, while real princes and princesses sat close by, while the banners of the Knights of the Garter waved softly and solemnly overhead, and the choir, among their flickering

candles, sang as I had never heard choir sing before—that was a revelation indeed. Too thrilling, too awe-inspiring, too august and remote from my own humble world to rouse any direct ambition, the experience nevertheless was decisive, in that it disclosed a mode of life so stately, as personified in gentle white-haired Dean Elliott, and so linked with English historic traditions, as to suggest an ideal of conduct which, though it could never be reached, might well be remembered. The emotional and aesthetic appeal of such places and services may not always be very lasting, or have any foundation in strict logic, but is anyone the worse for it ?

When the day came for my return to school it was snowing hard, so I was taken by my uncle to Sanger's Circus while inquiry was made as to the effect of the weather upon the railways. We emerged into a blizzard, staggered to the Arts Club in Hanover Square, to learn that, as the Canterbury trains might be snowed up (and they were), it would be best to return to Windsor. During tea, the members amused themselves by setting me passages from very cryptic French comic papers to construe, shouting with laughter at my translations, and sending me on my way the richer by five half-crowns. Muffled each in a rug, we tramped off to Paddington through snow now fully two feet deep, to find the Princess Christian and Miss Loch also waiting for the Windsor train. My awe soon vanished under the influence of their kindness and chocolates, but the storm caused so many stoppages that the journey took three and a half hours, and before the end of it the guard's long beard was frozen solid. Several days of ice-hockey at Datchet filled the interval before I returned to school, where the road was still lined with six-foot walls of snow.

A distant event, with which I had no direct connexion, now set about altering my future. A boy, utterly unknown to me even by name, obtained a scholarship at Winchester from a private school at Cheltenham. At that private school five of my Dickson uncles had been taught; the two ladies who owned it had become family friends, and to my uncle

Edmund in particular they were greatly attached. Miss Bessie Hill, the younger sister, as the classical scholar of the establishment, was naturally proud of the success of her favourite pupil, Reginald Cripps. Her pleasure communicated to my uncle Edmund the idea that I, too, might be capable of some such feat. In 1883 he devoted his Easter holiday to visiting Canterbury, and consulting the headmaster. He found Mr. Matheson most ready to help. My age, at the date of the examination, made Winchester impossible. It was settled, therefore, that I should compete at Eton.

When the news was broken to me I was dismayed, almost desperate. I had no particular affection for Canterbury, but I was able to visualize the ridiculous and inevitable contrast between my rough, ragged self and 'that beastly aristocratic hole' (as I termed it in a letter of protest), to which I was thus being propelled by my well-meaning but innocent Lancashire relatives. I had already been a new boy seven times, but this (for I had not forgotten my experiences at Windsor) would be the direst plunge of all. One small consolation was provided. A friend, the gentle, humorous Paul Kirkby, would also go up for the examination, so that I might not have to face the unknown in complete solitude.

I had never understood Mr. Matheson's Greek Grammar. To correct my too obvious muddling I was set to study Wordsworth's, in Latin, whereby confusion was doubly confounded. Yet Kirkby and I, being segregated from our fellows in the headmaster's study, spent more time in ragging than in work. Just at the end a nasty accident happened. I pretended to slay Kirkby with a blunt, broken pocket-knife, and to my horror the end went through his jacket into his shoulder. We adjourned to the infirmary, where the cut was plastered up. But some muscle or ligament had been touched, and Kirkby had to carry his arm in a sling to the examination at Eton, where he was not elected, while I, much luckier than I deserved to be, took fourth place. The success saved me from official punishment, but the thought

that I had probably damaged the prospects of a friend, clouded my last days at Canterbury. It needed all the distinction which Kirkby afterwards attained as a mathematician, to rid me of that unpleasant feeling.

Yet the secret terror with which I had regarded the prospect of transportation to Eton was sensibly relieved by that brief visit to the place;—by the stately grandeur of Upper School where the papers were set, by the kindness of a quaint little bearded master, whom I was afterwards to know as Jimmy Joynes, by the cheerful midday meal with the other candidates at the centre table in College Hall, and by the company of boys who did not, after all, seem completely different from myself. Also, I stayed with my uncle Richard at Windsor; saw the Library and St. George's Chapel once more,—discovered Doré's fascinating illustrations to the '*Contes Drolatiques*' (the text was quite beyond me); and caught sundry small roach off the Eyot above Windsor Bridge with a monstrous pole of a rod, hired for me from that genial expert Mr. B. R. Bambridge. Altogether the new world promised to be rather a wonderful place.

On reaching Preston I found that my brother's health was causing anxiety. He had been greatly weakened by a dangerous illness in the preceding year; and now, after six months as a day boy at the Preston Grammar School, was suffering from overwork. He, too, found it impossible to keep the pace which Osborne set. Though my mother, like one or two other parents, did his French exercises for him, a substitution which Osborne naturally recognized and grimly condoned, the strain was still too heavy. Remonstrance failing, Dr. James at Rossall was interviewed, and arranged to take my brother into his house at the beginning of 1884. Meanwhile we were both given a fortnight's holiday at Coniston.

We had ascended Ingleborough, we had explored the fells at Finsthwaite and Scorton, but the Coniston Old Man provided far wilder and more varied scenery. For a week we

ranged over all the crags and summits in the neighbourhood. Even fishing yielded to the new excitement, indeed our only two attempts at it were unlucky. Once we set out for Goat's Water, to be driven back by a terrific downpour which drenched our shivering bodies and, what was of almost equal importance, our luncheon sandwiches, in spite of so-called waterproofs. The silver trickle of a stream descending high above us from the black, cloudy hollow under Dow Crags remains the one visual memory of that dismal morning. Thirty years later, it was turned into a picture. On the other occasion we tested Levers Water, reported in our guide-book to contain fine trout. For us it contained nothing; not a movement stirred that inky tarn, and, as the clouds darkened over the great lonely amphitheatre in which we stood, the aspect of the water became more and more forbidding. What primeval monster might not have lived on there, like the undying fish of Bowscale, and be lurking for us? Seized with simultaneous panic, we fled headlong from the place.

Ruskin, preserved from the vulgar gaze by the guardianship of the Severns, was the local divinity: his likeness everywhere displayed in the little shops; his shrine, Brantwood, plainly visible across the lake from the Old Hall where our boat was housed. Towards it we rowed one Sunday afternoon. Copsewood came down to the stony beach; from the beach protruded a little stake to which a cord seemed to be attached. A night-line? That should be investigated. Rowing ashore, I landed to haul in the cord. Just as I had found it to be baited with a small discoloured trout, steps sounded from the woodland behind. Hastily throwing back bait and line, I pushed off the boat and clambered in; but hardly were we well afloat before an old gentleman with a gray beard emerged from the wood, waving a stick and cursing us vigorously for trespassing. It was the Ruskin of the photographs, and we rowed away a little frightened by this denunciation from the great recluse.

A short stay at Grasmere followed. Here the relics of a

dead Wordsworth, known to us only by guide-book quotations, could not really compete with the recent memory of a live Ruskin, whom we had not read at all, but whom we had actually seen and heard. Yet the company in which we found ourselves at The Wyke was so attractive as to invest the simplest excursions with a glamour that lasted for some time after our return to harsh, masculine realities at Preston. After a ridiculous effort to prepare my feeble frame for the coming ordeal with some ancestral and most unsuitable dumb-bells, the fatal day arrived when I journeyed in my mother's company to London and thence to Eton.

When a top-hat and other indispensable articles of dress had been procured from W. V. Brown's, I was introduced to my tutor E. D. Stone. His venerable and benevolent aspect removed my worst fears; the sight of my spacious stall in Chamber with its curtain and simple furniture reassured me further, so that when left to myself at last I was merely nervous, very nervous. To conceal it I armed myself with an assurance which I did not feel, and which led me during the next few days to some ludicrous performances. Certain of my new companions seemed almost odiously superior and well informed, having brothers or friends in the school. Others, if more polished and politic than I, proved not much wiser as to what might and might not be done, and our common ignorance became a bond of sympathy.

'Eton in the Eighties' and 'Playing Fields,' by my friend Eric Parker, describe with such inimitable veracity the company and the environment in which we now found ourselves, that I need not discuss them at length. In a week we had learned the ritual of Chamber, our place in the scheme of things as the lowliest of recognized existences, how the whole duty of our young lives was to walk humbly in the presence of all our seniors, and to learn the Wall Game. The teaching suffered from one grave defect, perhaps inevitable in the circumstances. All my Election had passed a high standard. Yet even the eldest, and I was nearly fifteen, were still fags

and new boys, quite unfitted in the eyes of authority for any place in the school corresponding to our classical attainments. So in Lower Division, to which I and half-a-dozen or more of my fellows in Chamber were relegated, we found ourselves put back to text-books of the most elementary type, which called for little or no preparation. In this comfortable state we remained for nearly two years.

And we started badly, in the Division of a gentle, fiery and distinguished scholar, where everybody ragged and rioted in a way which first astounded and then utterly corrupted our susceptible minds. Others, including of course that superb disciplinarian Frank Tarver, might keep us in check for the moment; but I quickly imitated the idleness and turbulence round me, to the marked displeasure of my tutor. A dignified senior, who had taught a whole generation of boys how to write finished elegiacs, had naturally little patience with the disturbance which a talkative and idle new-comer was continually creating in his pupil-room, and I soon got into his bad books. This was to prove unfortunate.

Slackness and ragging might be possible in some places, but the football field was not one of them. In my innocence, I had imagined Eton to be soft and luxurious; I was speedily undeceived. There was nothing luxurious about Chamber Game in Jordan, under the critical eye of the Keepers. If your panting body failed for one moment to follow up, a kick on the backside recalled you to duty. Once, only once, this happened to me, and I turned furiously to avenge the fancied insult. But I had hardly clenched my fists when the mighty Jenkins, as he trotted forward, just touched me with his shoulder, and sent me spinning into the mud. 'Bill Holmes,' he remarked, as he passed on, 'you must learn manners.' A memorable feature of these games in Jordan was their termination, when we trooped off to the willows by School Jump to retrieve our jackets and scarves, and to crowd round old Powell for a drink of the flat chilly beer which he served to us from a tin can with a long spout. It was rather nasty really, but like Powell him-

self, with his strange tall hat and velveteens, his gray elflocks, his portly person, and still more portly bag of footballs, the beer was an institution,—a sacred libation one might think, as one gray-trousered player after another tossed the dregs from his little pewter into the grass.

The joys of the well-ordered kick-about in College Field were evident from the first. Even though we formed part of the lowliest and outermost of its concentric circles, we had the thrilling spectacle of a dozen or more footballs rising and falling and thudding about us, with the blazered heroes in the middle, and visitors like Ainger and Cornish and Edward Lyttelton, who would turn aside from their walks and join us, regardless of the damage to top-hats and coats which a muddy ball from a misguided boot was wont to cause. How surely and strongly and neatly they kicked, defying it would seem the passage of years. Most thrilling of all was the sight of a ball soaring so inevitably towards one's own station that there was a chance of a volley, and then, if the foot moved as it should, the pleasant thwack, the slight shock, and the ball sailing over the whole arena.

Compared with this agreeable exercise, the Wall Game was a hard and exacting science. Great players came to watch our puny efforts, to impress the tradition of the Wall, to explain the precise duty of each separate member of a team, to encourage or reprove, as professional trainers might do, the youngsters who four or five years later would have to represent College on St. Andrew's Day. The theory of the game proved as fascinating as its practice was difficult. A single chance given to a behind might mean the loss of a match. At 'third,' where I was set to play, the peril was constant, but in calx I was usually allotted the delightful job of helping that all-important being, the furker. To extract, by delicate art and patient boot-work, a football from the midst of a thicket of stout legs tightly clasped around and upon it, in deep mud and darkness, is a feat to be proud of. Other deeds may be more spectacular, but none give more complete satisfaction than this victory of two minds and



bodies operating in unison over the massed opposition of a rival side. Was it not thus that we juniors once defeated the College team itself, playing 'out of their places' as the custom was, when George Marshall got a shy and threw a goal from it? That goal remains as distinctly in my memory as Mordaunt's famous goal of 1885. The team was so upset by their defeat that we had to play the match over again, and were swept out of effective existence.

Football, of a sort, naturally found a place with the more mythical Eton amusements which were recorded week after week in 'News from the Schools' by an enterprising boys' newspaper. To read just before St. Andrew's Day that 'The site of "The Wall" has not yet been chosen, but it will probably be Barnes Pool Bridge wall, which has recently been widened for the purpose,' was hardly more surprising than the text supplied of the Eton School Song, with its references to day boys, 'the Slunch' and prisoner's base.

'Oppidana  
Gens urbana  
Laudibus fulgebit,  
Gens diurna  
Sempiterna  
Floreat, florebit.

And

Slunna fluat,  
Semper ruat  
Capti fundamentum.'

This agreeable nonsense, composed by certain light-hearted members of Sixth Form, and afterwards reprinted in that rarest of booklets 'Eton as She is Not,' led to more than one unexpected consequence. Being much richer in incident than the bald chronicles sent in by more veracious contributors to the boys' newspaper aforesaid, and far surpassing them in style, it finally encouraged the Editor of the paper to pay a visit to Eton. Hasty preparations were made to welcome him. A fictitious College List was printed containing the aliases and nicknames which had figured in the 'news,' while we Lower boys spent two days in unravelling

scarves and making woollen tassels for caps; 'tassels' in the reports being the equivalent for colours. The Editor was suitably welcomed, entertained in Hall, and successfully brought through the ordeal of 'Absence' to a football game in South Meadow, where the tasselled caps were seen in all their glory, and we yelled with mock enthusiasm for the rival teams of 'Field Mice' and 'Jolly Boys.' He left delighted; we were relieved, and all seemed well.

Then, quite suddenly, the contributions from Eton ceased. It was some years before I learned the reason. S., the merry and friendly 'conduct' [chaplain], who was privy to the whole business and thoroughly enjoyed it, happened to be lunching with a master well known for his subtle scholarly humour, and in all innocence told him the story. His host, to the narrator's dismay, exclaimed, 'But it is calculated deceit,' and was for taking immediate punitive action. S. protested that anything of the sort would be a breach of confidence; but had to promise in the end that this Eton 'news' should stop forthwith. Shortly afterwards the paper itself ceased publication, an event which in our innocence we attributed to the hoaxing of the Editor. Yet my subsequent experiences of journalism make me wonder whether that Editor was not pleasantly hoaxing *us*. The nonsense contributed by Eton sent up his weekly circulation by several hundreds. To inquire too scrupulously into the causes of such a profitable increase would have been foolish, and that Editor was anything but a fool. The card which he left with my co-fagmaster Sterry on the occasion of his visit bore the name of 'Mr. Alfred Harmsworth.'

Ragging in school encouraged us to rag elsewhere, in an impartial way, so that most of us in Chamber had our peculiarities chastened and brought home to us. Only one super-logical spirit resented any sort of correction, arguing that if each unpleasing incident were sufficiently reported to the authorities, he was bound in the end to attain complete immunity. In vain did I represent (being myself *haud ignarus mali*) that a little casual ridicule or discomfort was

better than the permanent isolation which his method would produce. I failed to convince him, and soon found myself writing out a Georgic, with a company of amateur architects who had built a spire with his furniture. Other incidents followed in which I had no part, but then Fate turned on me with a vengeance.

A race along the corridor of the mathematical schools, a harmless scrimmage at the end, and the customary outcry of the logician, brought Johnny Lock on to the scene, and I was complained of for fighting in school. My tutor, already vexed by my idleness in pupil-room, declined to intervene; the Master in College was sympathetic but could not act if my tutor would not. So, with Bruce and St. Clair Erskine as 'holders down,' I came to the Head and the block. 'Any excuse?' asked the Head, in accordance with the ancient formula. 'Yes, Sir,' said I, prepared with witnesses to my innocence. 'Well,' replied Dr. Hornby, with his wonted calm, 'I have no time to hear it now'; so swished I was forthwith.

In the following summer (1884) I entered for the school Geology Prize, at the cost of some ridicule for my impudence. But, compared with the standard set two years before by my uncle Edmund, the papers were absurdly easy. A little later I was doing Trials in School Library when my good friend Badger Hale burst upon me, beaming as only he could beam. 'You've got it, my boy. You've got it!' Then Boggy Drew met me in the street, and congratulated me upon being a long way ahead of everyone else. Finally the Head sent for me to Chambers, and told me that the prize on this occasion would be divided between myself and a member of Sixth Form. 'But, Sir,' said I, 'Mr. Drew told me that I was easily first.' 'You are a little boy of bad character,' replied Dr. Hornby, 'and if you say any more I shall take away the prize altogether.' However, my truncated award just sufficed to buy me an edition of Gibbon at Ingalton Drake's, the most sensible prize which I ever chose.

Even then I had not done with my logical neighbour. I



F H and C J HOLMES  
1873



C J HOLMES AT LTON  
1884



kept well out of his way, and had risen to relative seniority, when accident again brought me to the brink of disaster. A musical contemporary was practising singing in his room, a practice distasteful to my friend Arthur Clutton-Brock. He suggested that we should quietly erect a pile of baths against the door, and then call the singer out to be overwhelmed, like the bad lady. We borrowed accordingly all the baths set out against the passage wall, and had made our pile when the logician happened to come upstairs. Seeing that his bath was missing from the row, he went off promptly to report its loss to the Master in College.

Of course we owned up at once when inquiry followed, but I was not prepared for the serious tone which Broadbent took about our innocent fun, and ventured to say so. 'You do not,' said he, 'appear to realize the gravity of your position. If I report the matter to the Headmaster, as perhaps I ought to do, you will have to leave. X is the one certain winner of the — Medal whom Eton has had for years, and the Headmaster decided long ago that he was to be kept here at any cost, while, at the first opportunity, an example could be made of you, as a troublesome boy who is not likely—er—to reflect any particular credit upon the school.'

So the gulf of expulsion yawned at my feet. I could only assure Broadbent earnestly that what had happened was pure accident, and that, if it could be overlooked, I would give my word to keep absolutely out of the danger zone in future, expressing myself so forcibly that he interrupted with 'Er—Go away!' Perhaps he merely intended to frighten me; but thanks to his frankness and plain speaking I became rather less of an unthinking ass than I had previously been. His words, anyhow, swept away in an instant the whole fanciful universe in which I had hitherto lived. I had accepted the verdicts of my elders, however unfair they might seem, as embodying the perfect righteousness which they preached to us, and as deviating from that lofty ideal only through imperfect information. It was now evident that

Policy, not Justice, was the true arbiter of our destinies, and expediency would have to be substituted henceforth for common Christian ethics.

A little self-control and restraint of manner had already been taught me by our *Duce*, Merrywood. His eagle eye overlooked no follies, foibles or shortcomings; his biting satire gained him obsequious allegiance, and would sometimes raise a laugh even from the victim under the lash. As agile in body as in mind, he was a master of those neat acrobatics which invest each action, whether on the football field or elsewhere, with a certain humorous grace; he reinforced this agility by a physical strength which made him a formidable opponent, even when alone. But he seldom acted alone, having always at his disposal anyone to whom he chose to beckon;—henchmen on whose obedience he could count, since any hesitation involved prompt loss of favour and certain future ridicule. After a time almost everyone in our Election had been thus elevated, used and degraded in turn, and though a few might privately resent humiliation, none ventured to challenge a supremacy so natural and so complete. He was a man: the rest of us mere schoolboys.

My loud voice, assurance and untidiness made me a perpetual mark for these barbed arrows, until, in desperation, I had once more to make resolutions for self-defence. Not being strong enough to face the opposing force, I fashioned a rude pair of Indian clubs on the lathe at Preston, and discovered swinging them to be not only an exhilarating exercise, but one which caused the arms and shoulders to swell quite visibly. Superstition fortified still further. In a careless moment the dictator had let slip the words, 'I reign alone, never to be cast down,' a challenge which the gods, if the classic examples held good, could not overlook.

Sure enough, when I came back ready for battle in January 1885, the Fates at once took a hand in the business. On the very first morning of the Half the dictator openly degraded the clever Sidney, presenting me thereby with an

ally and the wisest of counsellors. Yet even with the overwhelming force of liberators which Sidney collected, our campaign to make the place safe for mediocrity lasted a full six months. Indian-club practice did not save me from some damage at the first encounter, but the public execution, with grimly dramatic circumstance, of the dictator's two chief adherents proved to be the turning-point. The revolt then settled down into a silent, deadly social war, waged in and out of school with so much propriety, on the part of the two protagonists, that the end was mutual respect. Both have since attained the distinction which their characters then foreshadowed, and the lessons in behaviour received from these two friends during the conflict were, I believe, more important than anything else I was taught during my first two years at Eton. Considering the length and fierceness of the struggle, the casualties were ludicrous—the two public executions, one black eye, one bloody nose (mine), and one crumpled top-hat.



## CHAPTER V

### ETON AND RUSKIN

(1885-1887)

Discovery of 'Modern Painters'; attempts at drawing; the Library at Windsor Castle; Clutton-Brock as critic and poet; Lionel Headlam; fishing with Eric Parker; Edmond Warre; curiosity and religion; scholarship-hunting at Hertford, Christ's and Brasenose; my last day at Eton.

THE summer of 1885, the end of my second year at Eton, found me indolent, slipshod and contented. A little more money would have been welcome, since the expenses of a brother at Rossall compelled my allowance to be smaller than that of anyone else. Yet this did not worry me much; I had to set little store by appearances. Certain physical defects were more annoying. I thoroughly enjoyed football and cricket, but could develop no special aptitude for either. I could neither run nor jump. Hard experience had made me ready with my fists; but there was now no need to use them. The wild winds which had raged round my first year in College were hushed; the angry deeps of my Election had subsided into friendly somnolence. Each of us could go his own way undisturbed.

Drifting evasively through the appointed channels of Greek, Latin and Higher Mathematics, without observation or understanding, I earned from E. D. Stone, Johnny Cole, Luxmoore and Everard the reputation of being quick, idle, talkative and rather silly. The science masters, 'Badger' Hale, Madan and T. C. Porter, were more sympathetic. Although my precocious affection for geology had not outlived early discouragement, there did survive from it a vague apprehension of scientific principle, of cause and effect, which led me (often unwisely) to apply the experimental

method to cricket, and even to the sacred Wall Game. The 'googly' and 'leg-theory' were familiar secrets: I could still write an essay on 'Cool-runners' or upon 'The Art of Furking.' To science also, less directly, may be ascribed an interest in the construction of ironclads, and in the didactics of Samuel Smiles. In literature I had not emerged from the Tennyson stage. My ignorance of music, and the wonders of my singing in chapel, were as notorious as the idiotic profiles and scribbles with which I defaced my books and papers. The ordinary schoolboy ambitions could not excite one who was neither an athlete nor a scholar; besides, life being now so comfortable, it was simplest to take things as they came, and drift with the stream.

One afternoon, having nothing particular to do, I drifted into School Library. The old library in Weston's Yard, with its globes, its cast of The Gladiator, its copy of the Apollo Belvedere, its ample fireplace, and Bircher its patient, friendly custodian, had always been a pleasant and handy refuge, especially in winter, when the fire and the gas combined to manufacture a delicious frowst. The frowst indeed was apt to be so overpowering in the gallery of the place, that we seldom ventured there in dark weather. But it was now summer, and it occurred to me to investigate this rarely visited upper floor. Climbing the iron corkscrew, I went along all one side of the building without finding a single book worth looking at. By the far corner, however, a red cover and a promising title, Jomini's 'Art of War,' challenged attention; but the contents proved to be dreary reading. As I replaced the book, my eye was attracted to a neighbouring title, 'Modern Painters' by John Ruskin. I remembered Ruskin; he had cursed us at Coniston two years before. To see what sort of stuff he wrote, I took out a volume and settled down with it in the window-seat. Almost immediately I found myself captivated by his powers of description and invective. But five fat volumes! What were the others like? The beauty of the illustrations in vols. 3 to 5, and their puzzling titles, excited still further

curiosity. There was nothing for it but to go through the whole book and see what the man meant.

Then, as now, I found much of the philosophy incomprehensible, and skipped it. But the descriptive passages appealed to my natural bent for the solemn and the grandiloquent. The geology was sympathetic; the notes on the structure of trees and clouds wholly novel. I cannot remember at what point I was struck with the sudden splendour of a thought: 'If no one except Turner has ever painted landscape as yet, then there's room for *you*.' But the thought did come, and I proceeded at once to translate it into action. The simple paints and paper supplied for drawing maps gave me materials; but what about a subject? I could think of nothing whatever. Still, there was a woodcut of 'The Vale of Tempe' in 'The Student's Greece,' so, taking that beauty-spot for a model, I produced, with infinite labour, a crude little water-colour. I hardly expected to be able to paint all at once, but it was evident, even to my own partial eye, that I could not even draw. During the holidays I discovered Ruskin's 'Elements of Drawing' in the Preston Free Library, and set myself to learn on his principles, using Tenniel's illustrations to 'Alice' for copies, and presenting the results to my family for use as menu-cards. Yet with all my efforts I could never even approach the easy grace of my school-fellow Leonard Cotterill, whose every touch was clean and faultless. Indeed the first evidence that I had made some sort of progress was furnished quite unintentionally by Michael Furse, who stuck up one of my Du Maurier copies in his room, under the impression that he had found a genuine Cotterill.

'Modern Painters,' in due course, was succeeded by 'The Seven Lamps of Architecture,' 'The Stones of Venice,' and by the revealing of my new enthusiasm to others. First came my uncle Richard in the Library at Windsor. There, on Sundays, he would bring me out prints by Dürer, drawings by Raphael, Holbein and Leonardo (the finest surely of them all?), the famous Windsor miniatures, and finally

the collection of Whistler which he was forming for the Queen. For two years, nearly every Sunday afternoon was spent among these masterpieces, in learning the difference between good workmanship and bad. Incidentally, the splendours of the Castle, its magnitude, the profound reverence accorded to its mistress, and a smile from the Queen herself as I happened to meet her driving down Keate's Lane in her little pony-carriage, all served to make me more than ever a loyal little Conservative.

Next came Arthur Clutton-Brock. That independent enthusiast, already on the point of passing from Shelley's fountains of light and music to Swinburne's resounding ocean, was quick to welcome any interest outside the school routine. 'Don't you think College is rather a rotten place?' I remember him asking me. 'It's so beastly respectable.' There was just a grain of truth in the criticism. Distinguished from the rest of the school by their gowns and their separate games, as much as by any communal superiority in learning, or inferiority of private means, the King's Scholars, *togati* or 'Tugs,' when once the antics of childhood were done with, cultivated habits of self-restraint which discouraged any public show of originality in opinion or bearing. An Oppidan (and to this tolerance Eton owes many of its famous names) might be eccentric in his ways and appearance, or extravagant in his views, just as his fancy inclined. The Colleger, for the reputation of College, ought to be neither. Humour he might cultivate, within reason, but ambition was restricted to the recognized channels—games and classical scholarship. Any other outpouring of personality was suspect as dubious 'form,' and could be indulged only in strict privacy. So Brock and I were drawn together by our respective disreputable pleasures. He introduced me to Shelley, and was introduced in turn to Ruskin.

Brock's rugged face would light up, his left arm would saw the air to emphasize the lilt of the verse, as he declaimed his favourite passages from 'Hellas,' 'Adonais,' or Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads.' Nor was he content with passive

appreciation. When 'England and her Colonies' was set as the theme for the English Verse prize in 1886, most of us found it uncommonly tough material for poetry. To Brock, however, it brought the chance of uniting two of his pet admirations. Disraeli's 'Empire and Liberty' motto was expanded into a swift-running lyric in the manner of Shelley, and with so much vigour that it not only won the prize for him *hors concours*, but lingered for a long time in the memory of at least one of his hearers. When the 'Eton Fortnightly' was launched under his auspices, in February 1887, it was to Brock's articles and poems that we turned first. The paper is not, perhaps, so wonderful as we then thought it, yet Brock is not the only one of the contributors who has since made his mark in the world, and can look back without shame upon his infantile essays in literature. Fortunately my own efforts were all rejected.

A series of articles on Eton Poets was Brock's chief work in prose, a series foreshadowing the critical gifts which became so notable in after-life. At the time, judging from sundry protests, the criticisms would appear to have been above the heads of his school audience. Much of the work was evidently done in haste, as some odd misquotations prove, but there can be no question about the writer's sincerity and independence. Even his favourites are ruthlessly weighed in the balance. He describes, for example, Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads' as 'dangerous reading, much study of them is like opium-eating . . . giving a distaste for all other poetry,' and confesses that he himself has suffered thereby. Yet this indulgence in Swinburne was responsible for one poem, 'Achilles in Hades' (June 20th 1887), which, making every allowance for its derivative origin, is true poetry. Achilles tells Odysseus that in the sunless waste of the lower world

'No song of birds there is, and no man hears  
The thunder of the seas.  
But thou hast heard it, yet thy ears are ringing  
With laughter shaken from the windy deep ;

Small laughter have we in the land of sleep,  
 Wherefore, most welcome art thou, comrade, bringing  
 Long-lost remembrance with thy wave-born hands;  
 Almost I hear the ripple on shingly sands  
 Of the spent wave, the sound of rock-pent streams  
 Sucked back I hear, and now the free birds play  
 Flashing from crest to crest; now for one day  
 I know the constant moan, the sudden gleams  
 Of waters far away.'

In Brock's poetic work this Swinburnian period stands midway between his Shelley-like prize poem and the sonnet-sequence written in the late 'nineties, when he was undergoing a strong emotional experience, and had come to appreciate Shakespeare. Going up in the autumn of 1887 to New College, where the Wykehamist poet Lionel Johnson was already famous, Brock to my secret chagrin remained silent, and nearly twenty years were to pass before the talent he had first displayed in the 'Eton Fortnightly' became known all the world over through his contributions to the 'Times.'

William Morris, red beard, red tie and broad pea-jacket, came to lecture, provoking (deliberately, I'm told) gentle hisses by his praise of Socialism. F. W. H. Myers, in the course of a paper on 'Nelson,' read Campbell's 'Copenhagen' with memorable beauty. Dr. Hornby's silver eloquence was equal to both occasions. Most striking of all was Brandram's rendering of 'Much Ado.' No stage performance I have seen, from the Lyceum upward, held the audience spell-bound as did this one old gentleman, with his exquisitely varied mimicry, his humour and his power.

My messmate and chief confidant at this period was Lionel Headlam, the youngest of a family of famous scholars. His roguish humour had caused me no little annoyance in early days, but, coupled with his physical frailty, it utterly disarmed the hand of vengeance when the time for punishment arrived. With just a touch of the minx, to give savour to his charm and good sense, he quickly became the dictator

of our joint *ménage*, and the father-confessor to whom I carried my troubles and peccadilloes as meekly as my spare shillings. With Francis Fremantle and F. L. Bland (the politician and the financier) as successive fags, our breakfasts and teas, though sternly economic, made refreshing interludes in the daily round. Headlam's delicacy did not prevent him from getting a place quite early in the College Wall Eleven, but it increased as time went on, and to the sorrow of all who knew him, he died shortly after leaving Oxford.

Another friendship began with fishing. My holiday experiences among the carp, roach and eels of Lancashire made it impossible from the outset to overlook the river of the Playing Fields. It might be no historic trout-stream like that which educates the angling Wykehamist, yet the sluggish waters watched by that queer veteran Sergeant Leahy, the swifter stream that poured thence right down to the Old Oak, and the dark pike-haunted purlieus of Fellow's Pond were an irresistible lure, especially when B. R. Bambridge, the tackle-maker on Windsor Bridge, expert and optimist, had enlarged upon their possibilities. Eton was too tolerant to suppress fishermen. It merely classed them with eccentrics, who were best left to their own unaccountable pleasures. No Collegers apparently indulged in so dubious a sport. But in Eric Parker I found a fellow-enthusiast, in whose company it was easy to make a beginning when we were not needed for games.

Parker naturally caught most. The Editor of the 'Field' has proved by his writings that he has an exceptional eye for fishes, as for birds and beasts. He had also the more daring spirit. It was with him that I crossed, in all innocence, the forbidden railway bridge to catch, *coram omnibus*, in a scug cap, fat roach upon the flooded meadows right opposite the Playing Fields. I was with him in his disconcerting effort to catch pike with goldfish. But Parker soon attained to the dignity of the Shooting Eight, and then I had to angle alone. But in my last year accident or example

brought quite a little group of reputable seniors to the waterside, and fishing ceased for the time to be the plebeian business it had been in the days when we bargained with Sergeant Leahy for rods (such rods!) and bait at threepence an hour. I remember vividly how Vincent Yorke, returning one evening from Middle Club, waded into the swift stream in pads and wicket-keeping gloves, to lift out a roach of about a pound in weight which I had hooked on a single hair and could not bring to bank. Getting into College, rather late, my triumph was dashed by my house-master's greeting. 'What? Fishing!! You are too old for such filthy and childish pursuits.' And that, no doubt, was the general opinion.

Had we been able to adorn our disregard of convention by the magic plea of Thames Trout we might have been forgiven. But that noble quarry even then had become almost a legend, and only once did I come across a specimen of the breed. Walking through the Playing Fields one evening, I was attracted to the bank of Fellow's Eyot by the sight of bending rod in the hands of a Lower boy. He had hooked a Thames Trout with a worm, and was so much at a loss what to do, that he handed over his little 8-foot split-cane to me. Yet when the disparity between its bulk, some two pounds, and the tiny rod had lost its novelty, the fish provided no single thrill, proving to be a lumpish, unenterprising beast, who was got to the bank in two minutes. I believe that, like a prig, having an idea that three pounds was the Thames limit of size, I insisted upon his return to the water. His muddy brown colour suggested that he would anyhow have been uneatable.

These experiences came only as occasional intervals in the routine of football and cricket. To the Wall Game we were dedicated; the Field Game was a strenuous duty; my ambitions in both were checked and ended by two bouts of water-on-the-knee. Cricket was generally a more casual relaxation. But in 1885-6, under the rule of H. J. Mordaunt, backsliding was impossible. We were proud of him, for he



was Captain of the Eleven. But when he deigned to appear in College Game, it was rather a paralysing honour to have to try to play the bowling which had beaten Winchester, and to send down one's feeble off-breaks to one who was soon to make a century in the 'Varsity' Match. Like the Homeric Achilles he did not suffer gladly, but he could be generous too. I have seen him pull up in the middle of the pitch, when compiling a century, to call 'Well fielded!' to a tremulous mid-on, who from sheer fear of funk had managed to stop a terrific smack. He possessed, of course, the infernally straight eye of the Proosian Bates. After caning me once for some trivial horse-play, he claimed that each of the statutory seven strokes had hit the same check on my trousers, a claim which I quite independently verified. Luckily I was pretty tough, and there is a way of folding even a thin white shirt into a passable buffer.

Mordaunt was the single Colleger of the time who played for the School in the Field. At the Wall his record was unique. The famous goal which we saw him throw on St. Andrew's Day 1885 was only one of many notable performances; indeed a certain left foot volley in the first half of that match, with the ball slithering down the brickwork, had already almost exhausted our faculty of admiration. That superb kick remains as firmly fixed on the retina of memory as Mordaunt's subsequent jump from the bully in Good Calx, and the overhand bowling action with which he sent the ball thudding against the blue door. His intellectual gifts, in one direction at least, were no less remarkable. Marindin, through whose hands so many of the best Eton scholars had passed, once told me that Mordaunt's Greek Iambics were the best he had ever known a schoolboy to write.

But the dominating figure of my time at Eton was Edmond Warre. Till the beginning of my last year at school I had played games, and fished, and potted away at drawing and desultory reading, without any thought for the future, or any present distinction, since the twice-twisted knee robbed me

of the chance of playing on St. Andrew's Day. But the great and genial Warre did not overlook the humblest members of his Division. He put us at ease by his dinner-parties, he laughed and jested with us in school, till we came quickly to look upon him as one whose friendship and high ideals were alike irresistible. His mighty figure in itself was impressive in his doctor's gown; when he mounted a horse as Colonel of the Volunteers, it was magnificent. Prince Alexander of Bulgaria, fresh from the victory of Slivitzna, came over from Windsor to inspect the Eton Corps, watched by the pretty Princess May of Teck (our present Queen). Alexander, a big, handsome, bearded man, looked every inch the hero that he then was; yet Warre, when he put the Corps through its evolutions, fully held his own as one no less accustomed to high command. 'Sir,' said the Prince, 'you have the voice of a Field-Marshal.'

Warre's native military talent was still more conspicuously exhibited in the planning and execution of the torchlight procession to Windsor Castle at the 1887 Jubilee. Rumour had it that the great idea of this torchlight display, and of its musical accompaniment, was revealed to him in a dream. The elaborate manœuvres which he invented involved the drilling of the whole school for three weeks. Not all the boys, nor all the masters who led them, had any experience of military discipline, so that our training had its comic aspect. But Warre's enthusiasm carried the thing through, and 'on the night' our evolutions in and by the Quadrangle at Windsor went off without a hitch. Then, like a triumphant army, we marched back in fours along the High Street, whistling 'John Peel,' while the long serpent of torches flared and guttered and reeked of paraffin. Among the guests at the Castle was the Kaiser, who asked, I was told, one of his neighbours how long the school had been drilling. When the answer 'Three weeks' was given, he was at first incredulous. Then the words 'It would take *us* six months' slipped out, and were remembered.

When I reached the Head's Division, that discerning man

soon saw that my scholarship was not up to the current Eton standard, and explained frankly that it was useless for me to try for one of the scholarships at King's. With luck, my general information might pull me through at Oxford, where incapacity to write such things as Greek Prose might not be immediately fatal. So, very late in the day, I made frantic efforts to run through Homer and Virgil, my industry being stimulated by gratitude to Warre, unpleasant speculation as to my future if I failed, and by a severe fright.

On the first evening of the Winter Half, the irrepressible Battersby invited me to his room and shut the door. He had just been to Paris with his people, and had brought back some souvenirs—odd numbers of 'La Vie Parisienne' with cartoons by 'Mars,' startling enough to the innocent eye, but mild compared with a dozen very French photographs. He had just taken these from his box and handed them to me, when the door opened and in walked our house-master. The box lid snapped down safely enough on the illustrated paper, but I had barely time to slip those infernal photographs under my coat, where they made a shifting bundle, nearly an inch thick. An uneasy, interminable conversation followed. My arm was fixed to my side, to keep the slippery things from falling and bringing us both to perdition: the visitor felt there was something wrong, but couldn't tell what. When at last I ventured to make a break for my own room, it involved walking under his eye all down the passage, with my burden slithering lower and lower. But my luck held. Nothing actually fell, and the fright cured me once for all of any such curiosity.

Most of us, as a matter of fact, without being obtrusively pious, and allowing for the natural exuberances of adolescence, had decent ideals of conduct. We might succumb at times, as the young will do, to bursts of devotional enthusiasm, yet we kept them to ourselves, noting, perhaps, that they were generally followed by unsatisfactory reactions, so that it was really safer not to take things too seriously. My people had always hoped that I might follow in my father's

footsteps by taking orders. Though I had myself no sort of calling to that way of life, it was impossible to overlook altogether the doctrinal side of religion. Divinity formed a part, quite a considerable part, of our school-work, and in this, contrary to what may be the general impression, the Etonians of my time were, I fancy, at least as well grounded as the boys from any other public school.

Divinity, too, figured largely in the competition for the Newcastle Scholarship, and all my contemporaries who wished for distinction had to take it seriously. I tried like the rest, but found most of it utterly dull. Among the set books, however, for the 1886-7 examination was Lightfoot's 'Galatians,' and this proved unexpectedly fascinating. I had hitherto taken the Bible for granted, without any thought of its relation to history proper, so that it was illuminating to see, for the first time, how Christianity had developed from a Judaistic sect into a world-wide religion. Gradually and inevitably followed recognition of the man to whom the change was due: the zealous Pharisee, with whose acceptance of a religious revival among the peasants of a remote province originates the whole ethical pretext, if not the actual fabric, of our Western civilization. The Christians might have remained as local and obscure as the Ebionites, if a certain Saul, when he fell on the Damascus road, had happened to break his neck.

The duty of keeping order in College was generally simple enough; and excellent training. Crimes and punishments were usually debated at Sixth Form supper, so that hasty verdicts could be modified, if necessary, before final judgment was pronounced. Being less distinguished athletically than a group below us, we had to hold the reins of discipline discreetly. Since I occupied the room next to Chamber, it was my special function to keep the fifteen Lower-boy occupants in order. For this a reputation for ferocity was quite enough. In twelve months I caned nobody, and had only to set two hundred 'lines.' Reasonable licence we allowed. Once I was really startled by finding a very small

Colleger in my room, kneeling at my arm-chair, apparently absorbed in devotion. Investigation proved him to be a life-like fiction, made out of my top-hat, my gown, and a pair of boots, with my Liddell and Scott for a body, while the impudent Frankenstein was my own fag. Even a distinguished political career has not made him much more respectful. Only once was I faced with an emergency, when summoned in haste to stop a considerable uproar in Lower Passage. At the harsh sound of my voice the roysterers fled. Only the very biggest of them all remained to dance like a Jabberwock round me. The good Bishop must forgive me; there *was* a resemblance. To tell the giant, and he was an eminent giant even then, that he should be caned on the spot if he didn't go to his room, needed all the prestige of Sixth Form, and a little of the bruiser's desperate fatalism. Luckily for me, he went.

In the winter of 1886 the business of scholarship-hunting began with an attempt at Hertford, where the scholarships were more valuable than elsewhere at Oxford. It was bitter weather, but the loan of a fur-lined coat and sound boots, from my messmate Headlam, enabled me to face the chill airs and stone floor of the Divinity Schools, and to get as far as the final dozen before being rejected. Staying at 'The King's Arms,' my temporary abode, was a candidate from Norwich, with whom I struck up an acquaintance. Though no finished scholar, he had a determination to succeed which made me certain that I should hear of him again. Sure enough, when I next met him he was Sir Ernest Wild, the Recorder of London.

My great-uncle Charles Swainson, who had been a splendid friend to my father and mother, was at this time Master of Christ's; so it seemed good, after my failure at Oxford, that I should give Cambridge a chance. My private adviser was the Rev. H. Henn, then a Preston curate and afterwards Bishop of Burnley. A Trinity Hall man, he had a fierce contempt for Oxford and all its works, maintaining that Harper, the Principal of Jesus, was the one person who

propped the pillars of that rotten University. But about Christ's he was dubious: the College was poor and could not afford to give a scholarship, except to a certain First in the Tripos. The event proved him to be right. The papers set were the stiffest I have ever seen; and I found among my fellow-competitors one really first-rate scholar. To him they offered an Exhibition of £30 a year; my place was twelfth out of fourteen. Cambridge, as Warre had already pointed out, was clearly not the University for me.

Being now faced with total failure, it was necessary to plod on blindly at books during the Easter Half, economizing the leisure usually spent in football by going out to throw the hammer for half-an-hour every day. Hammer-throwing is one of the dullest events to watch from afar on a sports-ground: as an exercise it is quite the reverse. The ponderous metal responds so perfectly to each nicety of rhythm and swing, that the thrower seems to wield a power much greater than his own, a sensation particularly gratifying to those of indifferent physique, especially if the throw be made, in the mighty Cotterill's fashion, with a single turn of the body. The sight of a burly person being whirled round time after time, like a teetotum, is rarely impressive, and may be unprofitable as well as undignified if the ground happens to be slippery.

Looking back at those many weary hours spent with Legg, a friend and fellow-sufferer, over text and lexicon, I feel we were unlucky in living before the right use of translations was encouraged. No doubt our drudgery provided us with a vocabulary, but it did not teach us to catch the finer points of the authors with whom we wrestled. Had good translations been available, and permitted to those who were past the stage of Dr. Giles's 'Key to the Classics,' our reading would not only have been more extensive, but it would have been far more accurate and intelligent. I had not inherited my grandfather's gifts as a linguist. The acquisition of any alien tongue was always an immense mechanical labour, and the best intentions were apt to die away in distaste or drowsiness.

The last chance for a scholarship, and therewith for the supposed advantages of a University education, came in the summer of 1887; but I was at a loss to choose between the members of the big group of Colleges—University, Exeter, Oriel, Brasenose and Christ Church—which were proffering their wares. The question was settled by a chance remark of my sporting mentor, the Rev. John Wilson Pedder, as notable for his genial good sense as for his proficiency with rod and gun. ‘Go up to Brasenose,’ said he, ‘and fish the Windrush. You’ll never see anything like it again.’ On scrutinizing the Brasenose offer, it appeared that certain Exhibitions were reserved primarily for persons of small private means, who had been born in Lancashire. These heaven-sent conditions I could fulfil, so down went my name for this humble contest.

The sight of Oxford in the summer added further encouragement. Even the journey thither was embroidered by the company of a Town Council, fresh, very fresh, from a Jubilee lunch at Windsor Castle, and full also of anecdotes unmunicipal and unrepeatable. At Oxford there was a fair on Port Meadow, which bold spirits could attend in the evening; there was a merry company at meals in the College Hall; there were one or two kindly dons with whom we could talk at ease from arm-chairs in the front Quad. Among the candidates was a Wykehamist, Doughty, who many years later met fame and death at Gallipoli. Now he delighted me with his mischievous eye like a poacher’s, and his tales of the Itchen trout. This friendly atmosphere, a marked contrast to the chilly isolation of Cambridge, was not confined to Brasenose. It invaded and enlivened even the examination itself.

The papers set before us in Christ Church Hall—except for a quite fiendish opening to the lines set for Iambics—appeared like so many genial invitations to the intelligence, a welcome relief from the heart-breaking grammatical gymnastics on which pedants depend for the finding of talents like their own. Thus encouraged to show one’s mettle, it

was possible to scribble away at ease, to risk a short nap to refresh the mind, and then, in the last few minutes, to run through one's MS. with a fresh eye, and correct the more obvious blunders. Among my fellows, this habit of openly dozing got me the credit of being a confirmed idler. But it proved effective, for a telegram came to me at Eton shortly afterwards: 'Elected second scholarship Brasenose congratulations Bussell.' Doctor Bussell told me afterwards that, on my papers, I was second in the entire group of 120 candidates; he could not understand why I had put my name down only for a minor Exhibition. A little later, when he had seen the ordinary standard of my work, he wondered that I should have been elected at all.

Eton, at Easter, had placed me more justly as nineteenth in the examination for the Newcastle Scholarship. Accident now, though it could not redeem my intellectual credit, did me a very substantial service. The 'Pall Mall Gazette,' among its multifarious activities, was giving prominence to the respective academic successes of the chief public schools. At the head of the list stood St. Paul's, under the famous Walker, with eleven scholarships to its credit. My little success at Oxford happened to bring Eton level with St. Paul's, and so was particularly gratifying to the authorities. Among the properties of the school, advertised but unknown, were certain 'Goodall Exhibitions, to which deserving boys are nominated.' I was doubtful whether Dr. Hornby would even now consider me a deserving boy. But I needed any subsidy I could get, so with the help of my tutor, Johnny Cole, I sent in an application. It was promptly granted, and I could go up to Oxford without the fear of putting an intolerable strain upon the family funds.

Beyond that point, the future was too nebulous to be worth considering. Most of my contemporaries had long since settled their vocations in life, and were already looking forward, with the help of family advice and influence, to the Army or the Civil Service, to the learned professions, to big business, or to politics. I had no such family experience



to direct me, nor the very least inclination to take orders, the one course which would really have pleased my mother. My interest in geology had long ago been stifled. My experiments in writing had all been heavy, ridiculous failures; my little drawings, though they amused me more, I knew to be equally contemptible. I had proved myself a second-rate scholar and a fourth-rate athlete; a mastership in some minor preparatory school was the utmost I could expect. The prospect did not disturb me. I was fit for nothing better.

Meanwhile existence for a member of Sixth Form was made uncommonly pleasant. I still recall a delightful dinner with Mr. E. L. Vaughan, where A. C. Benson, with perhaps more eloquence than accuracy, held forth on art; and others where Edmond Warre, laying aside the robes of authority, became the most jovial of hosts, and opened our eyes to the ways and thoughts of the outside world. On another unforgettable day, Headlam, Tommy Lewis and I were granted the privilege of rowing up to Maidenhead, of dining, discreetly you may be sure, at a riverside hotel, and of loafing down-stream through the twilight to the Brocas. College cricket, at this time, being in a poor way, the more strenuous among us consoled ourselves first with single-wicket games, and then with lawn-tennis, a novelty in more than one sense when played on the nubbly bit of grass by the river, just beyond Sheep's Bridge. And, of course, there was always the fishing.

Had I been no sentimentalist, I might still have found it just a little melancholy to bid farewell to this friendly sheltered life; its majestic setting, and its historic associations. But all such appropriate regrets were driven clean out of my head by the sudden appearance of my good uncle Edmund on my very last afternoon. He had been responsible for my coming to Eton, and wished to see before I left how the experiment had worked. Unluckily that enthusiastic geologist was famous for his neglect of outward appearances. 'The best fellow in Lancashire, and the worst-

dressed man,' so an old friend once described him. On this occasion he had surpassed himself. Accustomed as I was to his normal untidiness, I got a distinct shock at the sight of the deplorable bowler descending over his ears, and the grubby ragged raincoat, wherein he was duly piloted by embarrassed affection all round the school in the summer sunshine. When we had made our final progress through the smart crowd of loungers up-town, and had reached the station, he suddenly said, 'You wouldn't suppose, to look at me, that I was carrying over £30,000 in my pocket to be delivered in London to-morrow? No one would think I was worth robbing?' I assured him fervently that he need have no fear on that score.

## CHAPTER VI

### BRASENOSE

(1887-1889)

A tour in Scotland; pictures at Manchester and Preston; carp and eels at Kirkham; friends and dons at Brasenose; Dr. Butler; Dr. Bussell; Walter Pater; the Rev. A. Chandler; boxing and other exercises; sketching and collecting; the Windrush; offer from Mr. Rivington.

THE occupations of my last year at Eton had been too anxious and too strenuous to leave leisure for the pursuit of art, except during the few weeks when I was laid up with a twisted knee. Now several factors combined to remove disabilities and encourage me to play with water-colours. In the first place, I did not look well and was sent to a clever Preston doctor to be overhauled. He reported overtaxed strength, and imminent risk of my father's lung trouble developing, unless I was more moderate in every sort of physical exertion. For example, when I went up to Oxford, I was not to row. I wondered whether we seniors in College did not really play rather too much football (seven games or so weekly) during the Winter Half. None the less, thinking him an alarmist, I did not pass on his opinion to my people; but it was to be sadly justified a year or two later in my brother's person.

Then, for a change of air, we had a trip to Scotland with my mother and a friend, Mrs. Inman, who had taken a lively interest in my efforts at drawing. The scenes on that journey were a revelation. They began with the Shap fells showing dark and huge against the barred sky of early morning: later we saw the mists on the Clyde gradually illumined and dissipated by the sun; then we were enchanted by the transparent western sea, its filmy inhabitants all

showing clear in the warm afternoon light. From Oban, our first stopping-place, I went out and made my first sketch from nature near Dunolly Castle. I found water-colour work in the open air to be such a troublesome business that, when we had crossed among the sheep in a tossing, splashing ferry-boat to Kerrera, I tackled the little tower of Gylen in pencil only. Finding pencil much less time-wasting than colour, I continued the practice. Over Loch Linnhe lay the hills of Morven and of Mull; they looked like a succession of Turner sketches as the clouds streamed and drifted across their shadowy contours. We naturally walked to the head of Glencoe, and miscalculating our time, had to run all the last seven miles back to Ballachulish from fear of missing the 'Mountaineer.' The wretched boat was an hour and a quarter late, so for that period we sat on the pier kicking our heels, cooling our bodies, and blessing Mr. David Mac-Brayne. But the food provided on the boat proved so excellent that we could bear no malice. From Dalmally, we tackled Ben Cruachan, to be defeated at last by mist when close to the very summit. Each of these excursions yielded one or two little pencil-drawings four or five inches square, to be finished at home and coloured from memory.

When we reached Killin, the scenery of Loch Tay excited us less than the sight of the Dochart, streaming among rocks and pot-holes under the bridge below the fir-topped island. To fish became more desirable than to draw; so at a linen-draper's I purchased for three shillings a stained rod, said to be greenheart, a few yards of line, a cast and a few flies. Several days passed before I could get out a passable line, but in the end, by crouching or lying flat on the rocks, I was able to deceive salmon-parr, and once actually lifted a half-pounder on to the stone which was my foothold, but alas! he got off into the water as I unhooked him. Nevertheless, when we left Killin I felt we had passed a sort of angling Rubicon. Henceforth, in a sort of way, I could throw a fly. That three-shilling rod, too, when fitted for a winch, was to

kill several hundred fish, before passing, dusty but unbroken, to the corner where derelicts repose.

Callander and the Trossachs, even Stirling and Edinburgh, are memories relatively faint, although posters announcing Irving as 'Hamlet,' at Edinburgh, led to the hope that we might stay on one day more and see the famous man. But my cautious mother, judging that even Irving's name and the connexion with Shakespeare would not reconcile my grandfather to our indulging in a theatre, decided that it would be safer to renounce the tempting prospect; so back we came. This Puritanic severity was shortly afterwards relaxed. We were permitted occasionally to watch the efforts of such touring companies as might visit the Theatre Royal, Preston, but their performances were not calculated to arouse enthusiasm for the stage, even though it was half-forbidden fruit.

The ideas of light and colour which Scotland had inspired were quickly reinforced by seeing the pictures in the Manchester Jubilee Exhibition. Hitherto my single source of artistic nourishment had been the little Newsham collection, crowded at this time into two or three small rooms in Preston Town Hall, which, with all its merit as a fine specimen of Gilbert-Scott-Gothic, was singularly ill-adapted for a picture-gallery. A vivid work by J. F. Lewis, several fiery landscapes by Linnell, and above all, the Arundel print of the *Adoration of the Lamb* attracted me most. The pictures collected at Manchester were far more notable, and warranted three excursions, a great effort for those days. Here I was introduced to the Pre-Raphaelites, to Rossetti's vivid colour-patterns, and to Millais' *Autumn Leaves*, which seemed then the most desirable of all, and has even now lost but little of that first enchantment. Of the larger works I was impressed by Poynter's little-known decorative paintings dealing with the legend of the Dragon of Wantley, and more particularly by Leighton's *Hercules wrestling with Death*. I have not seen the picture for many years, but surely it is far above the average of Victorian products in the classical mode?

With all these fresh matters for speculation and experiment, I stippled away happily on my little scraps of Whatman. This occupation at first was naturally thought by practical uncles to be mere idling, but the single expostulation which I happened to overhear was dealt with very decisively by my mother. 'It does no harm; it keeps him out of mischief, and I intend to encourage it.' She herself had drawn and painted a little, many years before, under my father's guidance, and her natural eye for the picturesque, both in hill scenery and in the smoke and flame of the industrial Midlands, had doubtless some effect in directing my attention to similar themes. A view of the factories at Warrington as seen from the train at evening was my first 'Industrial' experiment. In the winter, on the way back from watching football at Deepdale, we passed the skeleton of a burned-out cotton-mill, rising black and gaunt from the water;—a vision which has always remained in my memory, but which I could never turn into a satisfactory picture.

From time to time we were entertained at Kirkham by a sort of step-great-aunt, Mrs. Langton Birley, a clever, kindly, masterful old lady whom we loved and obeyed. Her factotum, Wilson the butler, had also won our hearts in childhood by his many tricks, our respect by his versatile talent. During this summer my brother and I were staying at Carr Hill, playing tennis on the lawn after lunch, when Wilson came out to make some announcement about meals. He watched us for a moment: then, picking up a racket, offered to play the two of us, and won a love game too, by means of a fast underhand service. As he retired he expressed the hope that our fishing, our chief occupation on this visit, would be more successful than our tennis. He would bring out a basket before lunch on the following day, to fetch our catch for his chickens. Now the mill-ponds at Kirkham were almost virgin water, and we had possibly been a little proud of catching twenty or thirty carp and roach that morning. But this challenge put us on our mettle, and we

extracted a promise that Wilson would carry all our catch back to the house.

Furnishing ourselves with a double allowance of bread for paste, we set forth early and fished with extra care. The carp bit well, and presently a small roach came to my hook. Disdaining such small fry, I put him back and he wobbled off over the top of the water three or four yards away. There came a flash in the depths, and from them serpentine up a great eel, all green and silver and some five feet long, seized the unlucky roach by the middle as a pike would do, and went back into the shadows. There was no time to deal with him then: our business was carp-catching. At last this pleasant corner among the water-lilies seemed exhausted, and we turned back to the great steaming pond in the middle of the mill-yard, which was reputed to contain the largest fish of all. Soon we were battling with them; once or twice their rushes broke our tackle; then a foreman came to beg us to stop. Every door and window in the great buildings round us was crowded with watchers who had left their looms, and could not be induced to go back.

But we had done enough. When our friend Wilson appeared, carrying in misplaced derision a huge clothes-basket, he got a shock. My brother's total was 38 carp, mine was 47; few were under  $\frac{1}{2}$  lb., eight were well over 1 lb., and one was some  $2\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. Wilson had to cry off his bargain—it was half-a-mile or more to the house—but as compensation he gave us directions to find the pike at Wrea Green, some three miles off,—a monster which devoured water birds, broke all anglers' tackle, and was credibly reported to weigh over 20 pounds. Here was adventure indeed for the morrow, when we had settled the problem suggested by the great eel.

That evening we set five stout night-lines, baiting them with dead roach. The next morning three were found twisted and broken, the others each held an eel of about 2 pounds—a disappointing result. Borrowing a bucket

from the mill, we proceeded to catch six or eight roach (they came to the hook like minnows), and then carried our splashing load between us, under a blazing August sun, over the infernal interminable cobble-stones of Kirkham and the dusty high road to Wrea Green. There we fished all through the long summer day, up and down the big pond to which we were directed, without the semblance of a 'run,' until the approach of the dinner hour compelled us to empty our bucket and hurry back. We might have done better had we devoted the day (our last) to those giant eels. I have often wondered whether, like most of the Lancashire mill-fish, they succumbed to poisonous lubricants. As for the Wrea Green pike, he was found dead, apparently from starvation, in the following spring; his wasted remains weighed only 8½ lbs.

All this time the usual crop of family speculations surrounded my future at Oxford. Only one of them caused me some little anxiety. By an odd coincidence, the senior scholarship at Brasenose had been gained by that very same Cripps, whose success at Winchester five years earlier had led my people to send me in for a scholarship at Eton. Our common acquaintances, in consequence, leaped to the conclusion that we should shortly meet and become friends. In reality, nothing is more certainly calculated to breed suspicion and dislike than such premature recommendation. I already loathed the name of one cousin (who proved when I met him to be delightful), because his academic triumphs were constantly held up to me for an example. Still more ghastly was the case of two other cousins, whom I was asked to befriend on their coming to Eton. One youth met me with a self-sufficiency which at least had the merit of excusing further intercourse; the other developed a simple dog-like fidelity which became quite embarrassing.

Life at Brasenose started officially with Chapel, and there, exchanging names before the service, I discovered Cripps to be my good-looking neighbour, cool and remote, but with a twinkle in his eye. In course of the service, the senior scholar



of a previous year, now a well-known member of the Fly-Fishers' Club, stepped out to read the Lesson. He stood a long time at the Lectern, getting redder and redder and turning the pages of the Bible this way and that. At last he started bravely, only to be pulled up at once by a high-pitched voice from the Vice-Principal's desk; the lesson he was reading was not the right one. 'Please, Sir,' he answered, 'the page isn't in the Book, Sir,' and went on firmly with his chapter. This pleasing incident broke down any remains of diffidence between us. Cripps and I had coffee together after Hall, and then adjourned to the rooms of an Eton contemporary whom I had recognized at the freshmen's table.

With him we found another freshman, whose rather simple face concealed, as we discovered later, no little shrewdness and common sense. Whisky was produced and whist proposed. I drew Cripps for partner. What points should we play? 'Oh!' said Cripps, laughing, 'the usual thing I suppose? Pound points and a fiver on the rubber.' His perilous jest was taken seriously by our opponents; I was too raw and timid to make a protest; and so that nightmare game began. I made a vow that, if Providence would only deliver me from the ruin that threatened my very first night at Oxford, I would never again play cards for money. And Providence must have heard the prayer. I had never less than five trumps in my hand and sometimes seven; victory was inevitable even for a duffer. The others played well (both, I found, were practised hands), but could do nothing against my luck. Their discomfort as the score steadily rose became unpleasantly evident. Finally the simple one rapped out, 'Here, I'm not going on with this. What do we owe you?' 'Fifty-two points at a penny,' replied Cripps to my intense relief, and the words were hardly spoken before each had whipped out the silver on to the table. I still wonder what would have happened if the luck had been on their side!

Brasenose, 'Good old B.N.C.' as others termed it, had a

character of its own for festive good-fellowship. As Balliol enlisted clever heads, so B.N.C. enlisted stout legs and arms. Matriculation was not made unduly difficult for deserving athletes. Yet a certain standard was maintained. For example, in my time, a well-known Eton oarsman was refused admittance. 'He couldn't spell,' explained the apologetic examiner; 'he could hardly even write his own name; we had to draw the line somewhere.' The College numbered only about 120, and then owed its repute to five or six famous rowing men, a great footballer, and to the Captain of the Oxford XI. Behind them came a dozen stout secondary performers, all being reinforced and, in season, applauded by some sixty vigorous, lively young Philistines. The more active scholars kept in touch with this central group;—a company tolerant of the genial duffer, merciless to the prig. Brasenose has never been famous for imparting the Oxford voice and manner.

I duly put my name down for rowing, but, when weighed, was judged too light for the 12-stone average of a Brasenose torpid. Next I tried football. The College then had but little need for it, and practice involved going alone to the Parks, to play aimless Association with a crowd of strangers. This futile dissipation of energy soon palled, and left me free to go my own way with Cripps. He, though naturally a fine athlete, was debarred alike from rowing and football by a damaged ankle, so that, for the moment, he had to seek air and exercise in other directions.

Of the Principal, 'Toby' Watson, a retiring Ciceronian, we naturally saw very little; but the well-beloved Vice-Principal, C. B. Heberden, lived on my staircase, and was about our path continually, a kindly scrupulous director of lectures and an uncommonly fine pianist. The good-looking Bursar, A. J. Butler, appeared first as the setter of Shakespeare's Sonnets, and the like severities, for Greek or Latin Verse, and as an austere critic of the trash that resulted. Gradually we came to know his charming wife and young family, his taste as a connoisseur, and his enthusiasm for

sport. He showed us the hidden treasures of the University Galleries, including the drawings by Turner and Ruskin in the Ruskin Drawing School: he was able to verify Willy Pedder's reference to the Windrush, and hinted that one day, perhaps, we might be allowed to visit the river.

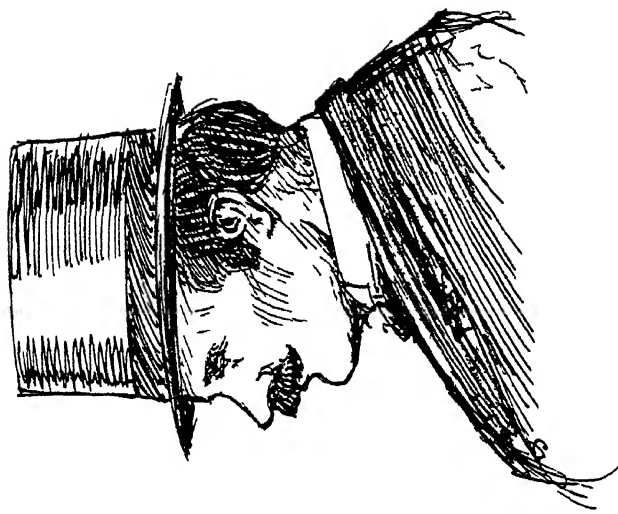
Latin Prose was supervised by Doctor Bussell, already a notable Oxford figure, with his eyeglass and dandified air, his smart riding-breeches and equally smart repartees; his phenomenal knowledge of philosophy and political history, of silver Latin and of stocks and shares; his precocious Doctorate in music and his singing of nigger-songs in an amazing falsetto treble. To me he was kindness itself. Deploring my complete ignorance of grammar and of style, he set himself one day to show me by the example of Tacitus, taken sentence by sentence, what literary expression really involved; emphasis in just the right place, with due regard to verbal assonances and variety of form. It was the best lesson I ever had, and made me feel how utterly wrong and unhelpful was the system on which I had been taught at Canterbury and Eton, the mechanical grinding at grammar and vocabulary with no comprehension of the essential thing—the precise and rhythmical use of words.

Looking back upon that remarkable half-hour, I have sometimes wondered whether its exceptional quality was not derived, in part at least, from Dr. Bussell's constant companion, Walter Pater. Pater's appearance at the time of my coming to Brasenose differed considerably from that which some three years later became familiar in Kensington. There he tripped along in a smart top-hat and black jacket, with stiff clipped moustache, neatly rolled umbrella and dog-skin gloves. But for the dreamy fixity of his gray eyes he might have been a retired major in the Rifle Brigade. At Oxford his hair was left to grow rather long, his moustaches to droop, his walk was a paddle, and the general effect that of a foreign musician, or possibly an organist. He took little part in College affairs, except to look over the essays of seniors when reading for 'Greats,' and to lecture from time



WALTER PATER IN OXFORD

Drawn by the author



WALTER PATER IN LONDON



to time on Plato. But his books, the 'Renaissance,' 'Marius the Epicurean' and the recently published 'Imaginary Portraits,' rendered him, for many of us, the most important personage in Oxford.

If Pater's public repute first impelled us to read him, it was by the exciting novelty of his message and the manner of its delivery that he held us. Novelty, excitement;—the words may now sound quaintly, but to repressed youthful Victorians the aesthetic ideal of life as outlined, with purple ink, in the Epilogue to the 'Renaissance,' and expanded more helpfully in the two later books, was nothing less than a revelation. However imperfectly apprehended, and we soon had evidence of the absurdities to which weak heads could reduce it, the theory gave a stimulus to thought, a purpose in the conduct of life, that were infinitely better than mere drifting with the current. If we did attach to certain sonorous paragraphs rather more importance than their actual content deserved, their quality anyhow helped us to appreciate the musical element in other literature; although, judging from certain deplorable essays, recently unearthed, the immediate effect was absolutely nil.

Pater was reputed to enjoy the high spirits and physical energy of the young barbarians about him. Once, he must have been sorely tried. During a rag, two exuberant sportsmen upset a large can of paraffin upon a second-floor carpet. Slowly the contents trickled between the ancient floorboards, and finally dripped steadily on to Pater's head as he lay asleep in the room below. Trouble followed the next morning, as a doggerel couplet, in a familiar hand, recorded on the plaster sacred to such inscriptions.

'Numphigenes oleo ludit Fenumque sub alma  
Matre, sed, O Monstrum: projicit ipse Pater.'

Of the lectures chosen for me, mostly under protest, only those on Aristotle's 'Poetics' were really inspiring, as much perhaps for the stately manner of the lecturer as for their subject-matter, though that was interesting enough.

Professor Riversby had a reputation for good-living. A friend told me that late one night he took an essay to the Rector of his College, a College which was just celebrating a notable success on the river. The discussion of the essay was suddenly disturbed by the rush of several lively rowing men along the passage outside, one of whom in passing shouted and thumped on the Rector's oak. My friend, recognizing the voice, feared that the tall oarsman who owned it would get into trouble. But the Rector, suddenly roused from his theological musings, was evidently not so much indignant as frightened. Advancing to the door, he whispered in tremulous entreaty, 'Riversby! Riversby! For Heaven's sake get to bed.'

Our Brasenose Chaplain, the Rev. Arthur Chandler, afterwards Bishop of Bloemfontein, provided exercise for the mind, the body, and on one occasion for the digestion. When we were very new to everything, he invited us casually and informally to supper at 8.30. Being dubious as to what the invitation implied, Cripps and I elected to make things safe by dining substantially in Hall. When we got to Chandler's rooms an hour or two later, we found the friendly but awe-inspiring Bursar to be our fellow-guest, and the 'supper' to be a most excellent dinner;—course after course, with wines to match. We did our valiant best to do them justice, but when we sank, at the coffee stage, into arm-chairs by the fire, our inert and comatose repletion could no longer be hidden. Amidst roars of laughter we owned up, for fear that worse things than foolishness should be suspected.

Chandler's subtle mind guided our first steps in philosophy, and I quickly got into trouble over an essay on Free Will, which I innocently challenged on scientific grounds, being quite unaware of its theological import. Those were the days when Huxley and Dr. Wace fought month after month in the 'Nineteenth Century,' over such dilemmas as that involved in the Miracle of the Gadarene Swine. Far more value was then attached to the evidences of religion than is the case now, and discussions on such themes as the narratives of the Resurrection were keen and frequent.

These problems, of course, were too simple and antiquated for the sacred precincts of the Ingoldsby (The College Essay Society), and for the deeply read seniors composing it, whose papers and debates we followed with considerable awe and little comprehension. Scholars of repute, philosophers familiar with 'Greats,' might possibly admit, with proper reservations and merely to facilitate discussion, that some form of provisional *TELOS* could be postulated as a substitute for the orthodox theogony; further than that they really could not go. To hear the learned Selbie, now Principal of Mansfield, dexterously holding some such intangible line of defence against the heavy guns and swift manœuvres of E. B. Titchener, afterwards Professor of Philosophy at Cornell, was an education in dialectic. Titchener's was certainly the most remarkable intellect I had encountered hitherto, covering languages and literature, philosophy and biology, with such ease and confidence that his nickname of 'God Almighty' was not to be wondered at, although it did no justice to his merry, sociable and friendly temper. Only once had we the courage to withstand him. The Baconian theory had just been revived, and Titchener, having mastered Ignatius Donnelly, proceeded to sweep the whole Ingoldsby Society into belief in Bacon, his cipher and the consequences. Utterly crushed in debate, and stubbornly impervious to all arguments other than those founded upon the poetic quality of the works in question, Cripps and I alone maintained to the bitter end our faith in Shakespeare.

Our Chaplain's activities outside Brasenose centred in the St. Aldate's Institute. There he got together a number of undergraduates, including one or two famous athletes, to interest and encourage the young men from the town. Gymnastics, boxing and fencing were taught. The fencing was of a rough-and-ready kind, the sergeant-instructor being no proficient. But Tom, I forget his surname, who taught boxing, was the local middle-weight champion, with more strength and pace than style, but a splendid fellow, with an imperturbable temper. By the aid of Ned Donnelly's little



handbook, and daily bouts with my brother, I had already acquired some elements of self-defence. At the Institute I got regular practice with the redoubtable Tom, becoming in time a sort of assistant-professor, to teach the new-comers, undergraduate or otherwise. It was good training, for many of the novices were athletes, and even those with good tempers could not sometimes resist the temptation to try to score off their instructor.

The winter provided a further lesson. John L. Sullivan, then champion of the world, gave a demonstration at Preston, bringing with him sundry middle-weights and light-weights. This, the first exhibition of professional boxing which I had seen, impressed me greatly by the extraordinary speed and reach of all the contestants. Sam Blacklock, one of the subsidiaries, appeared in these respects to be nearly as wonderful as the massive champion. From that moment, I set myself to acquire something like the same rapidity of movement and footwork, until there was little or nothing to fear from even the most violent of my Oxford opponents; except of course from honest Tom, whose whirlwind of hammer-blows could be met but imperfectly, and returned hardly at all.

To those who excel in nobler sports all this will seem but a squalid business; yet I do not repent in the least of the time spent on boxing. Boxing was excellent medicine for one both timid and quick-tempered. Half-an-hour or so gave the muscles enough exercise for a whole day; no mean virtue when other outlets for activity were few or intermittent. Certainly I never again got quite so physically fit, and the mild confidence acquired has carried me through more than one unpleasant encounter in after-life.

Brasenose at this time, with C. W. Kent and other notable oarsmen, was creating a new record at the head of the River, a record of which we 'dry-bobs' were naturally proud, but in which we played no part whatever. College cricket, as we had been warned, was run rather like country-house cricket. The College ground at that time was far away;

there were no opportunities for practice, and though our seniors meant well, we had few interests in common with them. So I came to avoid cricket, except when there was urgent need for an extra bowler, finding lawn-tennis, at which Cripps was a proficient, much better managed and more sociable.

Going to breakfast one Sunday with Rashleigh, then Captain of the Oxford Eleven, I found him indignant over the behaviour of W. G. Grace. W. G. had brought a team (perhaps the M.C.C.) to play against the University. At a dinner preceding the match, a waiter, by mistake, gave him liqueur brandy instead of sherry. Grace, suspecting a trick and having a head like cast-iron, said nothing, but insisted on 'taking wine' in turn with all the University team, until they were half fuddled and failed abjectly on the following day. He may have had some faint ground for suspicion. I remember when a very famous professional team of footballers came to Oxford to play the University, we were amazed to see their Captain fall flat on his face as he kicked off. They had been entertained just before to a sumptuous lunch, and the University in consequence lost only by four goals to none.

Our staple exercise, when nothing more strenuous claimed us, was walking. In those days the country round Oxford still retained the solitary pastoral character immortalized in 'Thyrsis' and 'The Scholar Gipsy.' Though we seldom went very far afield, the memory of some of those walks remains when countless things which were doubtless more important have completely vanished from the mind. It is impossible to forget the Rubens-like sunsets over the wet autumnal fields by Water-Eaton, the glories of a June morning on the track down to Bablockhythe, and the great panoramas from sundry high places: from Beckley, from the then lonely Boars' Hill, from the then unpolluted Cumnor Hurst. Also there was a great walk to Blenheim and Woodstock, made memorable by a midday meal of excellent roast mutton, apple-tart, cheese and three quarts of cider

(one for our friendly host) at a nameless little inn at Bladon. When I asked what the bill was, the innkeeper answered 'Fifteen pence.' I put down half-a-crown for the two of us, marvelling that we should escape so lightly;—and the good man handed me back one and threepence change.

These landscape impressions I tried to record in dry little water-colours. So unusual was the practice of drawing, so childish my products, that I was driven at first, by shyness, to explain them as the work of a mythical aunt. The single lecture by Herkomer, then Slade Professor, which I attended, taught me nothing, and deterred me from attending again. Through my friend Arthur Waters, I made the acquaintance of Mrs. Daniel of Worcester, always enthusiastic for the arts, and of her two little girls, Rachel and Ruth, who charmed me as they did so many far more famous persons. Through Cripps, I met the cultured Wykehamists of New College and saw Campbell Dodgson's library, reputed to be the best in Oxford. All were then excited over the critical revelations of Morelli;—a waste of time it seemed to me, when so many of the much-discussed works were evidently second-rate. Of Winchester I had gained some little knowledge from Cripps and from a new friend, Harold Child, who came to Brasenose in 1888, and whose subsequent career as a man of letters was foreshadowed by an enthusiasm for literature which he had caught from Lionel Johnson. College at Winchester might have many parallels with College at Eton;—its peculiar, intensive football; its epic, culminating in a terrific fight; its comedy, recorded in the 'Mushri Dictionary';—but in its patronage of art and letters it was unquestionably superior.

Another scholar and friend, B. S. Cornish, had inherited sundry Sketch Club drawings, among them two worked in monochrome by Cotman. These introduced me to a larger and grander style than anything I had previously seen, but I was much too inexperienced to understand or to imitate their quality. With Cornish, too, I hunted through the Oxford print-shops, Chaundy's in particular, buying scraps



REGINALD CRIPPS



HAROLD CHILD  
(Photo Russell and Sons)



of water-colour and minor etchings, and then, by comparison, finding out slowly what they were, or, more frequently, were not. If it be true that what we call experience is the record of our failures, I graduated early. Incidentally, among the etchings were certain early examples of William Strang, issued by the 'Portfolio.' Compared with most of the other things we saw, these seemed like the work of a giant, and indeed little else produced in the 'eighties could compare with them for power. No trace of these admirations is reflected in my own feeble efforts; I was still the slave of shilling handbooks.

A glorious memory of a very different kind is connected with a summer morning in 1888, when our friend Dr. Butler, after correcting my verses, said that, if Cripps and I cared to do so, we could go over to the Windrush by the 12 o'clock train. In the hope of this great event I had brought up my three-shilling rod; Cripps had bought a rod from Bambridge of Eton; both of us had invested in casts and clumsy cork-bodied Mayflies. From South Leigh we found our way across fields and fences, with the scent and blossom of the May all about us, until at last, by a bridge at the end of a big pasture, we came suddenly upon the rushing, weedy stream.

Cripps had never thrown a fly, so after a few minutes spent in explaining the essential movements, I left him by a shallow to practise, and crossed the bridge. As I did so a heavy shower blew up from the south-west, lashing the willows and drenching the meadow through which I struggled knee-deep. I had hardly reached the water below when out came the sun, and with it such a hatch of Mayfly as I have never seen again. In a moment the whole river was alive with splashing silvery monsters; the average length seemed to be about two feet. I hooked three in quick succession; no less quickly did they roll over and carry away my three new and costly Oxford casts. I was left only one two-yard length of gut, tied by myself, ancient and clumsy, but still apparently strong. With this I started afresh. Alas! the trout had lost their first greediness, and disdained my bedraggled monstrosity of a fly. I had to catch a natural

one, and that did the trick. In less than a minute I was steering a fish to the bank, while behind me a red-faced and excited young farmer was dancing about in his hay-grass and jabbing into the water with my landing-net. Depriving him of that dangerous weapon, I got the fish on to the bank. It was all bright silver like a sea-trout, and weighed  $2\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. that evening.

Still lost in wonder, I was roused by a shout from Cripps running across the meadow with a fish uplifted, 'Was it above the limit?' It was well over  $\frac{3}{4}$  lb., so we had our brace. That marvellous rise was not yet over, for a little later I got a second fish of  $1\frac{3}{4}$  lb. Though we never saw another trout that day, our return was a triumph, and the fish at breakfast proved as goodly to eat as they had been to see.

I have fished the water, on and off, for forty-five years, yet that wonderful first visit remains unique. In 1889 only chub showed. I hooked one very big one and, after ten minutes, got him from the deeps into my net. Having nothing else to show, I took him back to the College kitchen for fat Tom the scout. When I told Ronald Vickers, a brother angler, that I had caught a chub of 3 lbs. or more, he said, with the simplicity of those days, 'You liar.' We adjourned to the kitchen; the fish weighed 4 lbs. 15 ozs. Those great days are over. Pollution from Witney, ten years later, killed all the fish and their food; subsequent re-stocking has never restored the ancient happy conditions. Yet the new fish, though far fewer in number, are much better fighters than of old; indeed in this respect they are not much inferior to the sea-trout whom they have come once more to resemble.

Sea-trout we had met in 1888, during the visit to Lakeside which is mentioned in 'The Tarn and the Lake.' But the playing of the largest of all was interrupted by the sudden charge of a bull from behind. Before making off I attempted to hoist the fish out, but he was too big to lift, the trace broke, and I had to run for it, in a heavy Inverness cape, thick boots and gaiters, with 14-foot rod and landing-net, a creel with various tins, a flask, and a brace of fish, thumping and

clanking on my back. I am no runner, but on that occasion I ran, jumped a broad feeder, and climbed a six-foot timber fence, with the snorting brute galloping just behind. Ever since then I have been inordinately shy of the cattle in unknown places.

I had made a mess of 'Mods.' by reading myself stupid at the last moment. The mediocre Second Class which resulted made my future prospects anything but bright. Nor did Plato, and the subjects I was taking for 'Greats,' arouse any hopeful enthusiasm about my final Schools. I was plodding gloomily through Herbert Spencer at Preston, when I received a letter from my cousin Frank Rivington, the head of the publishing firm, offering me a trial there.

3 Waterloo Place,  
July 11th 1889.

MY DEAR HOLMES,— . . . Should you decide upon leaving Oxford and coming at once I propose to make an arrangement for 2 years at a salary of £300 per annum. I cannot guarantee anything beyond the 2 years, but my hope is that you will make yourself so thoroughly acquainted with the business that you will be able eventually to take a prominent part.

You must not consider me responsible for your leaving Oxford and giving up any prospects, but I should be pleased to fall in with any arrangement by which you could at some convenient time take your degree. If you accept my proposal you could come when you like, but it would be best to commence when I am here; in September I shall probably be away.—I am,  
Yours sincerely,  
F. H. RIVINGTON.

To hesitate over such a proposal would have been ridiculous, even if my circumstances had been far better than they were. I closed with the offer; wrote to Eton and to Brasenose resigning my scholarships; came up to Oxford to collect my little property, and, incidentally, on a hint from Jones our good College porter, secured quite a nice little lot of books from Gee the bookseller, with whom I had a credit. Gee went bankrupt on the following day. Then, about the middle of August, I said farewell to Lancashire and started life as a publisher's assistant in London.



## CHAPTER VII

### RIVINGTONS

(1889-1890)

The Rivington firm; Francis Rivington, churchman and man of business; my training; life in London; in Edinburgh with W. B. Laikie; Henley and the 'Scots Observer'; curious experience at Preston; death of my grandfather and my brother; Mr. Rivington's anxieties; the business sold to Longmans; introduction to Mr. Hanson.

FRANCIS HANSARD RIVINGTON, whose service I thus entered, had just dissolved partnership with his younger brother Septimus, and so become sole proprietor of the business of Rivington and Co. The oldest publishing firm in Great Britain, it had maintained a record of almost monotonous respectability from the time of its foundation in 1711.<sup>1</sup> Its branches in the City, at Oxford and at Cambridge, had for some time been given up, and the business concentrated in handsome pillared premises at 3 Waterloo Place, where relics of its former bookselling activities survived in the painted wooden sign of The Bible and Crown from St. Paul's Churchyard, and a Retail Department on the ground floor. Though no longer directly profitable, this shop was permitted to exist as a sort of rendezvous for folk of a religious bent. Mr. Gladstone, for example, was a regular customer; his postcards the subject of competition or petty commerce among local autograph-hunters. Also the latest publications of rival firms were always at hand, to be examined and analysed by those whose business it was to manufacture something still better.

The inclination of the Rivingtons towards divinity and

<sup>1</sup> An account of the firm and its ventures will be found in *The Publishing Family of Rivington*, by Septimus Rivington, M.A. London: Rivingtons; 1919.

devotional works had been accentuated by close connexion with the leaders of the Oxford Movement. As the public interest in church matters waned, decreasing profits from sermons were supplemented by publishing school-books, which the partners had gradually reduced to something like an exact commercial science. The obtaining and making of up-to-date school-books had been the duty of my cousin Septimus. Religion, together with the finance and general conduct of the business, had been the province of the elder brother, my new chief.

His temper and his intellect enabled Francis Rivington to reconcile and to control without effort these apparently disparate interests. Acquiring, amid the controversies surrounding the Oxford Movement, a singular knowledge of theologians and the Liturgy, he had become a zealous High Churchman, a liberal donor to Anglican causes, and a grim critic of their finance. The Church of All Saints, Margaret Street, was his especial care; almost all the well-known divines of the time were his friends or acquaintances. Few laymen indeed could have been so useful to them. His own attitude is best explained, perhaps, by a remark he once made to me when musing after dinner on the decline of religion in England. 'After all, the Church remains a great body; especially if we add to the Church Visible upon Earth the Church Invisible in Heaven. But,' he added regretfully, 'the latter don't buy books.'

His experience of business was no less complete. He had been plunged into its depths, as a collector of accounts and a subscriber of new books, from the moment that he left Highgate School (where my father had been his contemporary), at the age of seventeen. During the next thirty-eight years he had mastered its principles, so far as they affected the House of Rivington, by shrewd calculation and practical experiment. Recognizing, for example, that the booksellers were ruining themselves by giving excessive discounts to the public, Rivingtons introduced the net system in 1852, and maintained it for eight years. Then they were

compelled to abandon their lonely crusade, by the steady opposition of the retailers whom they had tried to benefit. This short-sighted stupidity caused a much-needed reform to be postponed for forty years.

He was not a man to be trifled with. Once he arranged with a scholar, then of some repute, for a text-book on Logic. When the MS. was ready, the author received his fee, £100, sending in return a few pages of written matter. That was his book. Expostulation brought a letter, concluding, 'I often hear of troubles between publishers and authors, in which the publisher invariably has the best of it. This time, I think, the laugh is on the author's side.' Francis Rivington pondered. Then, with very large type and ample spacing he padded out that manuscript till it covered some 32 pages; printed and bound 1000 copies, and sent out some 400 to the Press and the chief educational authorities, as the well-known scholar's latest work. The book was received with so much surprise and derision that the author asked leave to revise it. He got no reply, but the specimen copies were still more widely distributed, until the whole edition was gone, and the writer's reputation too. Again, when a well-connected assistant embezzled some £200, Mr. Rivington, in fairness to less privileged employés, felt bound to reject all offers of restitution, all family pleas for leniency, and to spend some £1200 upon pursuit to South America, extradition and prosecution.

Few men realized better the use and value of time. He was content to be thought old-fashioned, if a new fashion involved new calls upon his attention or his pocket. Probably no firm of the same magnitude as Rivingtons continued to keep their accounts by Single Entry. Francis Rivington did so deliberately, having calculated that a Double Entry staff would cost more than he could lose by occasional mistakes or pilfering. Many other possible developments of the business he no less deliberately neglected or deferred, because they involved greater claims upon his carefully guarded leisure than he chose to grant. The business was already sound and



FRANCIS RIVINGTON



W. L. HAGON



profitable; extensions could be postponed until there were assistants to look after them.

With this view, and to replace his brother Septimus, he had just taken in Mr. A. J. Butler, the Dante Scholar, from the Education Office, and Mr. Hatchard, publications and all, from Piccadilly. My position was of course more lowly, but I was soon admitted to an intimacy with my chief such as neither of my seniors enjoyed. Every morning, down in the basement among the packers, I wrote invoices, most of which were promptly torn up by Kelly, the supervising clerk, and had to be done again. In course of time I learned the trade prices, trade terms and relative popularity of our books, and got an acquaintance with the booksellers all over the country, their capacities, their temper, and, above all, their financial stability. The afternoon began upstairs with details of book production. I was drilled in estimating the price and quality of paper, in the methods and cost of printing, illustrating and binding, and made the acquaintance of Evan Spicer, Emery Walker, H. Orrinsmith, and other specialists whom the firm favoured. These things mastered (and E. W. Hibburd, who looked after me, was as strict in his methods as Kelly), I was passed on to my cousin's private room, ostensibly to make the firm's new educational catalogue. In the intervals of this rather drowsy work the great man himself took me in hand, explaining the principles of business administration, wherein the kindly manager, H. A. Moncrieff, was also an adept.

Francis Rivington spoke with an authority beyond question. There was something Imperial in that stately little presence: his bust would have been in its place among the Caesars. When he smiled behind his gold spectacles he looked like a Brother Cheeryble; when he did the opposite (it was rare, and never happened to me), he turned into a Bartolommeo Colleoni. Admiration for my father's self-sacrificing life may have started his interest in me. When I was at Eton he had put me up twice, once at no small inconvenience, for the Eton and Harrow match. Now with

infinite patience and kindness he went through the business of each day with me, introducing me gradually to the mystery of authors, their treatment and their agreements, asking me as gravely as if I had been senior partner, how this or that problem could best be handled, and not withholding even his private affairs from my knowledge, if there seemed to be anything in them by which I might profit. His worldly success, and the extraordinary foresight and good judgment by which he maintained it, so impressed me that I worked under him with an interest and an eagerness which I had never felt before.

After a few months I was promoted to the responsible duty of interviewing authors in the chief's absence. My first experience was curious. A schoolmaster wrote offering something for publication which Francis Rivington intended to refuse. I happened to mention that I knew the author, and that he had once let me down rather badly in my earlier days. 'Well,' said he, 'it will be an excellent opportunity for you to learn to say "No" without causing offence.' Giving me some hints as to how the firm's decision could be conveyed most gently, he insisted that I should occupy his chair of state when the author called. The interview proved much less trying than I had expected, but the odd and, as it happened, rather pitiful reversal of our situations convinced me that the ancient idea of Nemesis might not be all superstition.

It was quickly discovered that, as a religious publisher, there was no hope for me. Having naturally imbibed at Oxford a little of the current scepticism, I had rather shocked smiling Monsignor Rivington (*alias* Father Luke), my chief's brother, by the way I had talked of Catholicism to his friend Grissell, whose rooms at the corner of Holywell were rumoured to have witnessed many an undergraduate conversion. Then scepticism got an unexpected shock, during a visit to my uncle Frank Dickson at Ribchester. In his Trinity days he had been a runner and a hammer-thrower. We knew him as a poor, cheerful clergyman

crippled by gastric trouble. At Ribchester he revealed himself in a new light. He had quickly made friends with Father Perry the astronomer, and the colony of priests at Stonehurst. His parishioners, on the other hand, were practically Calvinists—no unusual phenomenon in Catholic Lancashire. To convert them to less narrow views was the immediate problem, and one which he soon mastered. When I had once heard him preach, and had talked with him a little, I recognized that here was something like genius, allied with gentle reason, of an order which I had never encountered. All objections were met, all difficulties explained, simply and at once. There must, I felt, be something very wrong with the Church of England, if it could leave such a man to labour and die (as he soon did) in a rough and remote parish, when in a wider field he might have done infinite good.

In general, I disliked sermons and devotional works. Even Gore's 'Lux Mundi,' the Tract XC of the moment, proved unreadable. So I was definitely dedicated to the baser but more entertaining science of manufacturing school-books. Owing to Mr. Rivington's training I acquired, in less than a year, a quite precocious knowledge of the business side of publishing, although in the conduct of larger affairs I remained almost as callow as nature had made me.

Life in London, too, now that the incubus of poverty was lifted, offered many pleasant novelties. The charming old streets behind Westminster Abbey had not then been discovered by well-to-do Members of Parliament. They contained only modest lodging-houses, among which, under the guidance of my good uncle Granville Dickson, then secretary of the Church Defence Association, I began to search for quarters. From our first choice, in Smith Square, I was evicted the moment my mother came up to London to see me, on the unchallengeable ground that the landlady was as disobliging as her rooms were filthy. From the more stately and far more comfortable first floor at 12 Great College Street, which she engaged for me, I walked every



morning to Waterloo Place by Dean's Yard and St. James's Park. My office hours being ten to six, with a liberal interval for lunch, I could slip along, now and then, to the National Gallery at midday, and get a still more precious fifty minutes for practising water-colour before I set out in the morning. This daily exercise gave me some handiness with my materials: that was all. I had no idea of style: my work was still dry and niggled, the drawing timid, the colour garish or dull.

London itself was far more exciting. At Westminster, in the Park, or in Pall Mall, one might see almost any of the notable men of the day:—Mr. Gladstone (the collar disappointing), Lord Salisbury (bigger than the caricatures), Mr. Balfour, Bishop Creighton (cigarette rather startling), Sir Frederic Leighton, looking like a little debonair Jupiter in a curly top-hat and flowing tie, as he set his smart shoe on Longman and Strongitharm's polished brass window-ledge to tie up an errant lace, or Sir John Millais looking like a stately and prosperous iron-master—while at the National Gallery Sir Frederic Burton might be hanging pictures in a smart gray frock-coat and lilac gloves. When I came of age in November, my name was put down for the Athenaeum by my uncle Richard Holmes, and in the hall there I was introduced to Seymour Haden, then at the height of his fame, and to 'Hang Theology' Rogers, my father's venerable chief. I joined a humbler club hard by, which had no such long waiting-list as the Athenaeum, and some excellent Burgundy. It went bankrupt two years later, and let me in for £26. An Irish Debate in the House, with Colonel Saunderson taunting Tim Healy and the Parnellites, seemed another satisfactory proof that one was come to the very hub of the universe.

Yet, such is human nature, the most consistent pleasure of all was to pass through Dean's Yard while the Westminster footballers were practising. The sight and the thud of the ball never failed to bring back the joyous days of College kick-about. And once, only once, I came through the

archway from Victoria Street upon the glorious vision of a ball sailing down over the railings only a few yards away. Alas! my satisfaction in treating that volley as it deserved was marred by the misbehaviour of my top-hat, which flew off into a puddle.

Having come down from Oxford two years in advance of my contemporaries, I was hard put to it at first for youthful company. My chief and other seniors were most hospitable, especially my uncle Granville. His pleasant house at Cheam became a regular week-end resort, where my clever aunt and lively, critical girl-cousins did their best to educate and entertain their clumsy relative. Yet solitary evenings in lodgings called for resources which I did not then possess, so I welcomed the suggestion that I should go up to Constable's at Edinburgh, for a few weeks in December, to study the minor mysteries of printing. For railway reading I was provided with two rival Greek Grammars, upon which a report was required. The comparison proved the reverse of tedious, and taught me more about the subject in a few hours than I had learned in the previous twelve years.

After breaking my journey at some North-country paper-mills,—bleak, savage uplands without, unlimited whisky within—I came in due course to Edinburgh. The Athens of the North at this time deserved its title in more senses than one, for nowhere was respect so generally and naturally paid to art and letters. With these cultured activities my host, W. B. Laikie, and the firm of T. and A. Constable which he controlled, were intimately connected. By day I would be working at Thistle Street, either with Laikie himself, or with his delightful but less practical partner, Archibald Constable. He had seen Sir Walter Scott, and his literary attainments made him the prince of proof-readers. Or I might be allotted for a few days as assistant to the 'minder' of a Wharfedale, helping to 'make ready' with a lump of paste on the back of my hand, and when the machine had started, lifting off the printed sheets; keeping an eye the

while upon my toes, lest through some unwary movement they should get nipped off.

But the mechanical side of the craft was not everything. The Constable firm, at this time, had no small share in the revival of printing as an art. Blaikie's taste and energy had equipped them with special types, special papers, and a style which had a character of its own, both handsome and solid. From Henley's little 'Book of Verses' (bound, I was told, in the red cloth of Hamilton Bruce's curtains) and the 'Scots Observer,' a weekly as striking in its typography as in its contents, to stately folios like 'Quasi Cursores' and the 'French and Dutch Loan Collection' catalogue, the Constable products were alike distinguished. The contrast between them and the commercial printing of the day was emphasized by a visit to Thomas Nelson's new works, then the very latest thing in scientific book production. It was fascinating to follow through room after room the development of the various parts of a book, from the raw material to the finished state, until these various currents, so diverse in origin, finally united at the binding-press, to produce a brand-new school 'Reader.' Thomas Nelson, in his own field, was clearly invincible. Yet all his manufacturing ability could not prevent the result from cutting a very poor figure beside the Constable books, where the design of a single title-page would be a labour of love, and of several weeks.

Out of office-hours I was introduced to the society of Edinburgh. The Professors of the University and the artists came first,—a genial company, in which I recall with particular pleasure the personality of David Masson and his stories of his native Aberdeen. In this company Walter Blaikie was well able to hold his own. Not only was he a Scot of Scots, nursed by the Alison Cunningham who later became famous as Stevenson's 'Cummy,' but as a young engineer in Kathiawar he had shot his lion, laid down a railway, built a palace, a church, a hospital, a jail, and planned a harbour; developing meanwhile the scientific

tastes and the profound historical knowledge for which in after years he came to be well known. His irrepressible wit, his inexhaustible energy, his enthusiasm for all good causes and his generosity in backing them, made him a natural centre for the intellectual activities of the place, and one venture in which he was then concerned has a niche of its own in the history of letters.

The 'Scots Observer,' perhaps the most brilliant and vigorous weekly journal ever seen in this country, was largely Blaikie's creation, since it was he who induced W. E. Henley to leave London to edit it for his friend Fitzroy Bell. To one accustomed to the sobriety of the 'Athenaeum' and the 'Spectator,' Henley's unrestrained expression of his likes and dislikes, especially the latter, was amusing enough, but the impression he left was less permanent and potent than that of work by sundry writers till then unknown: 'The Time Machine' by H. G. Wells; 'Barrack-Room Ballads' by Rudyard Kipling (Blaikie claimed Kipling as his find); poems by W. B. Yeats; essays by Charles Whibley; stories by Marriott Watson, Neil Munro and others whom Henley's genius had discovered or was training. Fearful that I might never come across them again, I cut out the contributions of Wells, Yeats and Kipling, and kept them in an envelope.

Henley's own poems I quickly knew by heart, and on one awe-inspiring afternoon he took me to see the collection of R. T. Hamilton Bruce, then the most famous of its kind in Edinburgh. 'No art-criticism, please,' was Henley's sole condition, but since he discoursed to me in his inimitable, trenchant fashion, from the moment I joined him in the hansom to the moment when I got back to Blaikie's door, the caution was needless. His red beard, his crutches and his flaming energy so absorbed attention that the pictures, our ostensible objective, might hardly have existed. The Barbizon School was then regarded as a daring and, in some respects, a revolutionary innovation, yet all that remained in my memory was disappointment with the majority, a vague interest in Monticelli, and a rather less vague pleasure

in Corot's atmospheric compositions. Henley's talk on such things as the orchestration of poetry completely ousted any rival interest.

The patriotic nationalism of the Scots amused him: I had found it mildly embarrassing. Insistence upon racial individuality, which has recently become such a disturbing factor in modern world-politics, was then unknown to us. While recognizing that each race had its own traditions and peculiarities, we English thought that civilization implied a search for points of contact rather than a stressing of differences. Yet in this most hospitable and jolly Edinburgh household I discovered that I was the hereditary foe. 'I hate all the English,' remarked one of the little girls at breakfast, 'I will neverr neverr marrry any English perrson.' Blaikie too, with all his breadth of mind, was first and foremost a Scot, a true son of the Covenant. It was of the Covenanters that he talked all one bitter Sunday, as we tramped from Roslin on to the snow-clad Pentlands where the martyrs lie; it was with their descendants of the Free Kirk that he took us to worship. When in reading 'Wandering Willie's Tale' he came to the passage about the Persecutors, he uttered their names with the vehemence of a still active hatred. The sympathy with Scottish feeling and history that I then acquired has never left me. I have always felt at home in Scotland, and time after time have owed much to the friendship and generosity of those who maintain the ancient national tradition.

The night I came south to Preston for Christmas was marked by a curious experience. I was sitting alone reading by the dining-room fire, long after the rest of the household had gone to bed, when the silence was abruptly broken by a heavy footstep walking down the hall outside. Burglars? To whip out a match-box, light one of the candelabra on the mantelpiece, seize the poker and rush to the door, did not take me long. But the hall was empty; so was the broad staircase, so were the locked and bolted servants' quarters.

Ashamed of my panic I said nothing about it, not even

to my brother, who arrived the next day. Once more I sat up late, exchanging news with him; once more I heard the heavy step go down the hall outside. I made no move. But my brother jumped up, saying, 'There's a man in the house,' and went through precisely the same motions as I had done the night before. Again the hall was empty. I was relieved to find my experience had been no hallucination. We were both puzzled. We had known the house from childhood; every sound in it, as a rule, was familiar to us, and could be traced instinctively to its source. On the following evening we went out to a dance, and got back to the house at about half-past one. To avoid waking our grandfather, who was eighty and a light sleeper, we entered very softly, taking off our shoes. As we closed the door, with the bristles of the door-mat pricking through our thin socks, the heavy step started close by us in the darkness, and proceeded, as before, to pace the length of the hall. I struck a match instantly, but, as before, the place was empty.

On the next night, Christmas Eve, we were again startled, this time by my mother's voice, announcing that my grandfather had been taken ill, and that the doctor must be sent for at once. Three days later the old gentleman died. His estate, some £50,000, did not amount to much when divided among his ten surviving children and their families; the house, which had so long been their recognized centre, was doomed to pass into the hands of strangers, the fine old furniture, portraits, plate and china to be dispersed. We could not help wondering whether the footsteps had not been some vague and ineffective premonition of the impending change.

Many years later I found that my wife had had a somewhat similar experience. A distant relative, the last of her race, had died in London. In consequence, her old family house in Westmorland passed to my wife, who was sleeping there with her stepmother on the night before the funeral, while the body was on its way North. In the small hours they were both awakened by a gentle footstep outside the

door, which my wife opened, thinking that the maid had come with their morning tea. But there was no one. Presently the footsteps entered the bedroom, walking this way and that while they lay and listened in terror. Was the old lady paying a last visit to her ancestral home? Mice, of course, provide the materialist with an easy alternative; although, if that be the explanation, it is odd that the step has never been heard there again for forty years or more. The slow ponderous tread of the Preston visitant, at all events, can have had no such skittish origin.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to London after my grandfather's funeral, I found Rivingtons in the grip of influenza, which in 1890 was a serious, even a dangerous, novelty. Out of a staff of thirty-one, twenty-eight, including Mr. Rivington himself, were prostrated by the epidemic, and while, as one of the three survivors, I was trying to fill one gap after another, I was suddenly summoned to Cambridge to my brother's death-bed. His appearance of health had been delusive. By his devotion to rowing he had overtaxed his strength (I now saw the force of our doctor's warning), and had contracted a wasting disease for which no remedy was then known. Influenza merely hastened a result which was inevitable.

At the time this knowledge was no consolation. My brother Frank had not only been my companion in every kind of mischief, adventure and amusement, but was the one upon whom we all relied for steady, unselfish good sense. Many years later at Oxford, Dr. James told me that he was the best and nicest schoolboy he had ever known. And yet he was no prig, for his charity included, his humanity attracted, black sheep as well as schoolmasters and ordinary

<sup>1</sup> The evidence even for objective apparitions can be rather strong. During Commem' in the summer following, I lunched at Wadham with a family named Worthington, father, mother, son and daughters. They had all lived for fifteen years in a vicarage where a ghost made frequent and apparently quite meaningless appearances. Commonly identified with Abraham Cowley, it paid no attention to citations from that poet's works; frightened nobody except newly arrived maidservants, and once had been unwise enough to venture out on to the lawn, whence the irreverent youngsters chased it with tennis-rackets *through the net*.

good fellows. To my mother in particular his sudden and unexpected death remained a grief hardly second even to my father's loss. She was now dependent upon me alone, and in poor health too, facts which had a considerable bearing upon the course I followed during the next few years.

She soon came up to London and settled down with me at 10 Kensington Crescent. The time I had previously spent every morning in practising water-colour was now taken up by the business of catching a Hammersmith bus, and getting to Waterloo Place. The week-ends alone were left, and by compromising with my devout mother, I could use most of Sunday for drawing, if I went to the evening service at S. Mathias. This I rather liked. One might get a distant glimpse of Pater, now very smart and top-hatted, and there was always a chance of compensation for the sermon in the shape of a processional hymn, with a swinging rhythm and a pleasant suggestion of far more ancient rituals.

My mother's health remained a constant anxiety. She worked energetically for the C.O.S. under the direction of my cousin Harry Toynbee, but was never for long out of the hands of doctors and specialists. My second anxiety was a change in the situation at Rivingtons. When laid up with influenza, Mr. Rivington realized that at fifty-five he was no longer quite a young man, and that any long illness would have a most detrimental effect upon the business, and therewith upon his family fortunes. Butler, nominally the second in command, regarded these apprehensions lightly. A scholar who had been an intimate friend of Matthew Arnold, he lived in a world of his own, occupied just then by the 'Alpine Journal,' by his new text of Dante, and by a comic antipathy towards his Oxford namesake, my friend the Bursar of Brasenose. Although these two scholars had never met, the constant confusion between their personalities, and their works, had led to something like impatience, on one side at least, and each was careful when naming his children to see that the unhappy identity should not recur.



In the previous autumn Francis Rivington had told me with some amusement how Horatio Bottomley had called, fur overcoat, big cigar and all, to ask him if he would sell Rivingtons to the Hansard Publishing Union, which Bottomley was then promoting. 'Certainly,' said my cousin, 'the price will be two hundred thousand pounds.' 'Will you take half in shares?' was the next inquiry; 'No, I'm afraid I must ask for cash,' the reply. 'Ah! Mr. Rivington,' said Horatio, 'then I fear we shan't be able to do business,' and so went on his way.

Now my cousin's mood had altered. Some means of stabilizing his interests and getting relief from the everyday labour of business would have to be found. I was not therefore wholly surprised when he announced to me one day that he had decided to turn the business into a private limited company, with H. A. Moncrieff and myself (this was indeed a surprise) as its Managing Directors. Before doing so, however, he intended to offer the business for sale to Messrs. Longman. If they were willing to pay the price he would ask (and they were the only publishing firm in London who could do so), that would enable him to retire at once, and take the holiday to which after thirty-eight years of hard work he felt himself entitled. My interests, in any case, would be safeguarded.

The amazing prospect of a managing directorship at the age of twenty-one, in a prosperous business which I was beginning to understand, with colleagues whom I thoroughly liked, vanished almost at once. Longmans had no sooner checked a few of the copyright valuations than they decided to acquire a concern which not only marched with their own, but also might serve as a buffer against competition, particularly from the rival educational business which my cousin Septimus had recently started, under the title of Percival and Co., and which became, in time, the existing Rivington firm. The financial part of the transfer was quickly arranged, and in due course I brought back to Waterloo Place a cheque for £30,000 as deposit on the

purchase price. But my own future was not so easily settled. Longmans very naturally wished, and intimated, that my little specialist knowledge of educational publishing should not be made available for any rival concern, such as Percival and Co. Yet the partners had sons of their own whose future prospects, they feared, might suffer if I were admitted to any prominent place in their establishment at Paternoster Row. They were willing to take me over with the rest of the Rivington staff at my existing salary, but only on the condition that I was not to ask later for an improvement as regards payment or position. Any suggestion as to that must come from their side, and there could, of course, be no question of any share in the business in after years.

I have sometimes wondered whether a little more tact and experience in negotiation than I then possessed, might not have reduced these restrictions to a workable arrangement. Had I guessed what the anxieties and disappointments of the next seven years were to be, I would have accepted the proposals, restrictions and all, and made educational publishing my business in life. To my advisers at the time, however, Longmans' condition seemed too rigorous, and Mr. Rivington sent me to his solicitor with a letter stating that, if I wished to embark in any suitable business, a sum of from £5000 to £7000, either without interest or at a nominal rate, would be available for me as capital. Educational publishing, by the understanding with Longmans, was specially excepted: otherwise I might look where I pleased, only, as the solicitor breezily explained, 'The business must be a real business; not art, of course, or any nonsense of that sort.'

My cousin was leaving England almost at once for a tour round the world, and would be away for about a year. Before he left, he introduced me at the Albemarle Club to a big, suave gentleman, Mr. Edward Hanson, who was understood to be looking out for a partner in the Ballantyne Press, of which he was the chief proprietor. It was quickly

arranged that I should go to 14 Tavistock Street towards the end of August, to learn to become a printer.

Two diversions intervened. A fortnight at Newby Bridge provided proof that poultry will eat your trout, if you leave them on the bank; that a pike when hooked in a salmon river will fight and leap like a salmon; also that if you get up at four in the morning you may attract a salmon with a worm. There followed another wonderful fortnight at North Berwick with the Blaikies, when under the eye of the famous Ben Sayers and the criticism of my caddie, afterwards famous too as Jack White, I was introduced to the baffling mysteries and fascination of golf. Towards the end of my stay, Blaikie asked me whether I would come to him in Edinburgh and join the Constable firm. I did not consider myself irrevocably bound to Mr. Hanson, but my mother's health and residence in London made a move to Scotland seem impracticable, so that I treated the offer more lightly than I should have done. The friendship and companionship of a man like Blaikie were not likely to be found again, and my first experiment in active life was already, in reality, a fiasco.

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## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BALLANTYNE PRESS

(1890-1892)

Life as a compositor and proof-reader; unemployment; study at South Kensington; Edward Arnold; visit to Holland and Belgium; art, cricket and a thunderstorm; return to Ballantyne's as book-keeper; Covent Garden characters; Ricketts and Shannon befriend me; efforts at etching; return to publishing.

How complete the fiasco did not immediately become apparent. With the glamour of golf now added to the glamour of fishing, I started work gaily enough as a compositor in Tavistock Street. Collimore, the clicker of my companionship, was a pleasant fellow; the other compositors, though sometimes rough, always grubby and ill-paid (Ballantyne's was a non-union house), were good fellows too, with no more than the common faults of the British workman, and certainly all his virtues. It was touching to see the consideration everybody showed for Mr. D., a broken-down educated gentleman, who in his spare moments would talk to me of books, Keats being his special favourite. Poor old dear! He could only earn about 18s. a week. Happily he was discovered by some relative a year or two later, and rescued from his pitiable state. What, too, had been the history of A., the fiery, red-nosed and universally dreaded proof-reader, who one day startled me by a scathing criticism of Thomas Love Peacock? A printing-office is the natural catch-pit for literary derelicts. Memorable also was our annual wayzgoose, when with flaunting asters in every buttonhole we drove in a big wagonette (I blushed in prominence by the driver) to Hadleigh Woods, caroused modestly, and at the last in the deepening twilight formed a

search-party to find a dear maudlin old Irishman, who had staggered away unnoticed to sleep it off in the undergrowth.

Meanwhile I was learning to roll my shirt-sleeves up to my arm-pits, to pick type neatly from the filthy and sometimes verminous cases, to set it and distribute it with reasonable precision, to earn thereby seven or eight shillings a week for the benefit of the 'ship,' and to speak the language of my fellows. This habit was not easily cast off when the day's work was done. I had often to think quite hard before talking in ordinary society: indeed to this day my language is apt to exhale a whiff of Covent Garden. The squalor and isolation in which I worked did not at first depress me: they seemed essential preliminaries to better things. But as the weeks lengthened into months, and the heads of the firm had apparently forgotten my existence, I began to grow anxious. When Christmas came I ventured to ask what the next stage was to be. I could be a 'reader' was the reply.

In due course I was settled in a box with an intelligent *gamin* of a reading-boy, and masses of proofs, ranging from 'Home Chimes' to a mighty work on Fungology. This, owing to the illegibility of the author's manuscript and the recondite classicalism of his scientific vocabulary, had bothered even the formidable Mr. A. Unfortunately the management so stinted our supply of gas that we had to work in semi-darkness, and by the end of three months I had strained my excellent eyesight. Yet as case-work had taught me the cost and technical details of type-setting, so reading taught me the cost and mystery of printers' corrections, that eternal source of suspicion and dispute between those who write books and those who produce them.

Authors and publishers do not always know how much a good printer's reader may do for them. Quite apart from his detection of misprints, the reader is the assessor who settles what is a fair allowance for the time involved in making corrections, as opposed (it may be) to the demands of a foreman who, in the interest of his 'ship,' will perhaps

charge six hours' work as eight hours, if he thinks the claim will pass muster.<sup>1</sup>

The commercial side of proof-reading naturally brought me into frequent contact with Mushet, who kept the firm's accounts. To my surprise I found that this tall, grave and capable gentleman had been serving the firm for eight or nine years, with exactly the same promise of advancement as myself, but had got no further than a high stool in the counting-house. He was beginning to despair of any move being made to reinforce the existing management, and I, knowing his sound abilities, became almost equally desperate. If his promotion to a junior partnership could be thus indefinitely postponed, what could my chance be? I found out quickly enough. When I reported that I had more or less mastered the business of proof-reading, and would like to learn some other phase of the craft, it was suggested that I had better stay where I was for the present. I was in too much of a hurry to get on.

Clearly the benignant Fortune who had promoted me from Canterbury to Eton, from Eton to Oxford, and thence to an honourable place in the Rivington business, had grown tired of her mediocre favourite, and had dropped him in a *cul-de-sac*. There was nothing for it but to retire politely, join the ranks of the unemployed, and look about for another opening.

London publishers then, though competing keenly with each other, formed a singularly close corporation, presenting no gap into which I could conveniently step. One firm, otherwise interesting and interested, was put off (Oh the irony of it!), because the Rivingtons were High Church; I must therefore have acquired leanings towards the Scarlet Woman. The Longmans very kindly offered me a position in their New York house which, on my mother's account, I was obliged to decline. A firm of more dubious repute seemed anxious to secure my assistance, but wilted when I asked, before committing myself, if I might see their copy-

<sup>1</sup> This system, I now hear, is by no means universal.

right valuations. Hither and thither I tramped and inquired, but could hear of nobody who had the least need of my valuable services and months of experience.

Being thus cut off from any opportunity of resuming work as a publisher or a printer, it was necessary to do or learn something else. Art naturally suggested itself, but its open pursuit was barred by the family solicitor's ruling. That I could not disregard without risking the loss of my cousin's goodwill, and therewith impairing my mother's future prospects. Her income was insufficient for comfortable living, without either some help from me, or annual drawings from capital; the course which we had ultimately to adopt. But a ticket for the Art Library at South Kensington Museum could not reasonably be held as an infringement of the family embargo, and in hours of enforced leisure I could make drawings from the casts as others did. The method of most of the students, their timid elaborate modelling with stump and charcoal, seemed an extravagant waste of time. If a cast or statue was to be drawn, two hours, or thereabouts, was a sufficient allowance: so each spare morning was devoted to a time-drawing in pencil of a new subject. Spare afternoons were spent in the Library, browsing over picture-books, or copying Charles Keene. Taking a small sketch-book with me as I went to and fro, I practised making notes of faces and incidents in the streets. These resulted in a few compositions which I ventured to send to 'Punch.' They were returned of course, but with a note so polite that the refusal seemed a compliment. I came across these old drawings a short time ago. One is just tolerable: the remainder show little humour and no real observation.

In June 1890, before I could carry these experiments further, I heard from Charles Knight Clowes that a young publisher, Edward Arnold, was about to move from the City to Bedford Street, and might require some help. Arnold proved very pleasant and frank, could offer me no salary, but would be glad if I could come and help him to clear off the arrears occasioned by his removal. I set to

work at once in Bedford Street, explained to him, I fear, how he ought to manage his business, and towards the end of July saw the mountains of occupation dwindling, dwindling to the vanishing point. In a week or two I should evidently be out of a job once more. The emergency recalled a remark of my uncle Richard Holmes that, of all places within easy distance, Holland and Belgium were the best worth seeing. My friend Cripps was willing to join me in a little tour, so I was able to tell Arnold, to his evident relief, that as business was now so quiet I would take the opportunity of going abroad.

We had £20 each to travel with, and on that sum, after consulting Messrs. Gaze, we proposed to 'do' Bruges, Ghent, Brussels, Malines, Antwerp, Rotterdam, The Hague, Delft, Leyden, Haarlem and Amsterdam. And we 'did' them all, with £1 to spare, by mapping out our route for each day with transatlantic method, but allowing a margin always for prolonged enthusiasm, sketching, and other causes of delay. Antwerp, indeed, was the only place which we rather scamped, because the hotel proved so dear and its Vesuvio so eruptive. Our flight from it, jolting and swaying over the cobble-stones to the station, provided us with all the anxieties and sensations which we had missed on our Channel crossing. Elsewhere we missed little or nothing which Baedeker held to be worth seeing.

So long as one is young enough to carry one's own suit-case, and to put up now and then with petty discomforts, travelling *in forma pauperis* is the best of adventures, and the most instructive. Of course the guest at a Palace or an Embassy meets famous personages, but the attention due to them has to be subtracted from the store available for studying the country and its works of art. In even worse case is the visitor who passes from a grand hotel in one place to a grand hotel, exactly like it, in another. The hotel becomes the inevitable centre of his little limited world. The car from its door takes him with the same impartiality to the Forum or the Louvre; to Pompeii, the Acropolis or the Pyramids, returning him in



due course to the same cosmopolitan *table d'hôte*. The super-efficient hotel service shields him from real contact with the people of the country: its information bureau saves him from the trouble and the thrills of exploration. Admitting its many conveniences for those who have definite business in a place, its cleanliness and its admirable plumbing, the *hôtel de luxe* has something to answer for as a contributory to international misunderstanding.

The impecunious tourist, in sheer self-defence, has to observe and to learn. He has to find his way for himself, and so comes across much that is hidden from the rich, as they are whirled, patronizing and unsecing, from one show-place to the next. Having no interpreter he must struggle with the language, make the acquaintance of ordinary folk, eat and drink as they do, and find every day fresh little adventures among them. Having no more than the stars in his Baedeker to guide him, his reactions to each new spectacle are unbiassed. If some constellations disappoint, a single asterisk now and then will prove a veritable Sirius. He travels the farthest who travels alone—or nearly so.

Our outstanding sensations began with the Michelangelo *Madonna* at Bruges, and *The Adoration of the Lamb*, concluding with the works of Vermeer—then almost unknown in England, the single example hanging high in the corner of a bedroom at Windsor. Among places, Rotterdam with its huge half-dismantled windmills and tumble-down suburban watersides, like a series of Rembrandt drawings, and Leyden with its graceful Stadthuis, its moated bastions, gave quite unexpected pleasure. Rotterdam's broad handsome main street now runs where the black Cool Vest reflected its great windmill; the suburbs are buried under vast blocks of workmen's dwellings. The Stadthuis at Leyden has been burned down, and such traces of seventeenth-century Holland as remain are hemmed in and overshadowed by the stark erections of modern commerce.

We learned something of one aspect of the Belgian character during an evening spent with a chance-met Brussels

carpenter, in various whitewashed *estaminets*, where itinerant vendors came and went with evening papers, hard-boiled eggs, and trays of pallid little cooked crabs. Our companion proved a charming fellow, hospitable, sensible, temperate, and taught us that the prosperity of the country was probably based far more securely on such men as he, than on the astuteness of Leopold and his Congo financiers. Of merry, comfortable Holland we were given a different impression. At Scheveningen we lighted upon a first-rate concert of classical music, combined with an entertainment for the veterans (mostly rather bibulous) of the Dutch-Belgian war, which roused a casual Dutch acquaintance to bewail the decay of the national character, owing to a too easy prosperity. To us the Dutch were invariably kind, from small services such as proffering a chair if one stopped to draw by the wayside, to more serious help, as when an Amsterdam official made so gross an overcharge that we went indignantly to a police-court. There, after begging us, amid universal merriment, to discard our Dutch and our dictionary and to plead in French, the authorities heard us most patiently and promised redress. Unluckily we had to leave before justice could actually be done.

Again, at The Hague, we happened to stop to watch some cricketers playing single-wicket in the foot-high grass of the Park. Presently one of the flannelled young Dutchmen came forward, and invited us so warmly to take a hand that it seemed churlish to refuse. They had enjoyed playing an English team, and would like more practice. We were the less unwilling to risk our national credit, since the bowler was sending down harmless slows. But when, under that pleasant delusion, I went to the wicket, they took that simple bowler off, and put on a big fast left-hander, whose balls were none the easier to play because they stuck for an instant as they pitched in the hay-grass. Luckily he missed the wicket, and at last I got a long hop which I cut hard to point. The ball pitched a few yards off, and rose vertically from the grass with an odd crack, followed by the bald head

of a stout Dutchman who had been lying invisible, close to the wicket. He rubbed his skull with a good-natured grin and then settled down again to his sleep. Terrified of repeating the damage, I ran out at the next ball, lifted it well into the country, and then insisted on taking a part in the game which involved no danger of homicide.

At Leyden alone did we meet with a real scare. The sight of canals boiling with good-sized fish led us to purchase a cheap rod and local tackle;—thin green twine and a rusty hook. But when we reached the waterside after dinner, all was still. As we tried alternately to hook some rare and languid nibbler, we noticed a strange phenomenon. Far away in the north-west a gigantic cloud was swelling up, its top just catching the light of the sunken sun. Such a towering colossus of the sky I have never seen again. Before we reached the hotel remote mutterings of thunder began, which developed into flashes and crashes of steadily increasing intensity. By midnight the detonations had grown to nerve-racking violence and the atmospheric oppression made bedclothes intolerable, yet the focus was still some distance away. With most unpleasing certainty the bombardment crept steadily nearer and nearer, each shock a trifle worse than the last, until, at about two in the morning, the climax came overhead, the blaze and the bang being simultaneous and terrific. Outside the lightning illumined a dazzling wall of water; within the whole staff was afoot with fire-buckets, for the hotel was one of the tallest buildings in the place. Then, to our fervent relief, there came a just perceptible interval between the light and sound of the discharge, and for the next four hours with the same portentous deliberation the menace moved away. We were afterwards told by our host, with sly Dutch humour, that when the countryfolk are caught in the open by these storms they lie flat on the earth, lest they should make targets for the lightning, being perhaps the tallest things for miles around.

Our tour concluded with a rough crossing from Rotterdam, enlivened by a cabin-mate who from the opposite

bunk expounded, with a strong American accent, the true place of Herbert Spencer as a philosopher, between paroxysms even more violent than ours. On reaching London with a much enlarged experience of pictures, and a number of little pencil-studies, I reported to Edward Arnold, and found myself unexpectedly welcome. Work had once more accumulated during my absence. Would I come to him again and accept a retaining fee of £10 a month? Naturally I was delighted. But when December approached, and the season's books had been successfully launched, it was evident that there was little left for me to do. I could not expect payment for idleness, and foresaw that in another month I should once more be out of a job. The loss in money could be borne, for my cousin had very generously intimated that he would make up my earnings to the amount of my Rivington salary until I was in settled employment, but the continued discouragement was less tolerable.

Oppressed by this anxiety, I was walking along the Embankment during my luncheon-hour when I ran into an old acquaintance, Mushet of the Ballantyne Press. He was on his way back from a visit to the *President*, then moored close by, to return his R.N.V.R. rifle. Having at last given up all hope of promotion in Tavistock Street, he had purchased some land in Tasmania, and was going there in search of a healthier and more active life. Nobody had been appointed, as yet, to take his place, and his salary had been £150. I walked straight up to Ballantyne's, offered my services, and was engaged on the spot as book-keeper from the beginning of the New Year, 1892, at a salary of £120. Mushet's venture did not, I believe, turn out fortunately. Later he volunteered for the South African War, and in the course of it succumbed to typhoid fever. My place at Arnold's was filled by my friend Desborough Walford, with whose clever mother, the novelist, and charming family, I spent some pleasant week-ends in their fine old house at Ilford.

Another memory is of revisiting Stratton and Bude with my mother, a memory now grown faint except for one silly adventure. Canon Bone, his sisters at Stratton, the Carnsews at Poughill, were all hospitality, and with Johnny Carnsew, afterwards killed in South Africa, I had a day's rough shooting in the rain, using a borrowed muzzle-loading 12-bore. Carnsew, knowing the gun, did the loading. At one point I was just crossing a high-banked hedge when some birds (they were rarities that day) got up. My first barrel missed fire, my second produced an explosion which knocked me clean over backwards into a ditch full of water, with a hammer of the gun through my never attractive nose. Distracted, no doubt, by my talk, Johnny had put both charges into the left barrel. As the expedition bordered upon poaching, we had to patch the mess up privately, and trust to luck and lying. Both held good.

Though a stool in a Covent Garden counting-house would not satisfy an ordinary man's commercial ambition, the post which I had thus, quite accidentally, obtained was not without mitigating features. I was at last really earning something by doing the common hack-work of the world, with no help of privilege or patronage; in humble surroundings, yet with an unexpected variety of duties and visitors to keep me interested. Had I only been able to add figures more quickly and correctly, the actual book-keeping would have been simple enough. As it was, when the firm's accounts were audited at the end of six months, I was found to be 'out' to the extent of £2,100, 10s. 1d. The missing pounds were discovered almost at once, the ten shillings on the following day, but the penny defied them all, until the cheerful, sensible junior partner, from Scotland, produced the sum from his pocket, and saved the expense of further auditing. I was interested to find that this business of entering and adding figures became a routine, making so little demand upon the other parts of the mind as to leave me quite fresh at the end of the week to start drawing or anything else. Indeed the monotony of the

work appeared, by contrast, to be an actual stimulus to creation.

The counting-house occupied the ground floor, being separated from the pavement of the market square only by a big window. At the end of it, a small partition enclosed the busy manager, Mr. Charles McCall (twin-brother, in his lighter mood, to Moroni's *Lawyer*), who in almost any other firm would have been a partner, so completely was the business under his control. At the desks with me sat the clerks, George Massey, a quaint young Scot, and Charles Stevens, a merry dog, who had once been manservant to Godwin the architect, and so was on familiar terms with Whistler and others of that group. The Whistler tradition was strong in the office, which was still littered with proofs of 'The Gentle Art of making Enemies' and full of memories of his visits and conversation.

Below us rumbled and quivered the main machine-room, so crowded with moving metal that to walk through it safely needed experience, as on the days of official inspection it needed a big lunch for the inspector, so that he could see no further than the door. Cut out of a second machine-room behind us lay a dismal little waiting-room, illumined obscurely through the ground glass of the partition, and warmed by a gas-fire which, for economy, was never lighted. The record for endurance in it, fifty-three minutes, was held in my time by the representative of an American firm. On the floor above, Mr. Hanson enjoyed the use of a chair and a desk reputed to have belonged to Sir Walter Scott, of whom a muzzy portrait, very much 'after' Raeburn, hung over the fireplace, as a further reminder of the Ballantyne tradition.

The hero of the place was disclosed to me only by accident. A crowd gathered round our door, one day, with the message, 'A man is killing his wife in the market. Will Mr. Smith come, please?' In a few moments a smallish, delicate-looking machine-minder, whom I had found the quietest and most gentle of his kind, trudged out, still

aproned, meek and bareheaded. The crowd formed up reverently in his wake, and off they all went to the scene of trouble. In private life, it appeared, Smith was a well-known prize-fighter, and more feared by the roughs of the neighbourhood than any official guardians of the peace. A less laudable diversion was afforded by two very well-known society ladies. They dabbled rather prominently in literature, among other things, and at one time drove together regularly to Covent Garden, to pick up a tall young commercial traveller from a neighbouring office. For a while he blossomed out in their carriage, bibulous and ludicrous, with inappropriate top-hat and ill-fitting high collar; then he was seen no more.

From the cloistered interior of a publishing firm one gets but a partial view of the world of letters. Only success, complete or potential, gains admittance there; and of successes, only those in the particular line of business which the publisher runs. In that select environment I had interviewed authors frequently, as I had called officially on some of the more famous University figures. But until I came to the Ballantyne Press, the half had not been told me. There, all sorts and conditions of writers called to inquire about their proofs, from the editors of sporting papers, loud of voice and lurid of tongue, to Cardinal Vaughan, as princelike in courtesy as in appearance.

Grant Allen I particularly remember. He came with 'something very important,' and would see no one but the manager. Mr. McCall was out. But a few minutes' reflection in the twilight of our famous waiting-room was enough. Grant Allen emerged and decided after all to unfold his great business to me. He had translated the 'Attis,' which, as he very kindly explained, was a Latin poem by Catullus. To prove my interest I ventured to ask (since a prose version seemed no occasion for trumpets) whether he had managed to reproduce the original metre? He became quite snappy. Henley too would sometimes hoist himself in, genial as ever, but worn and battered, I thought, compared with his Edin-

burgh days. More vivid still, and more pleasant, since it left no thought of his physical handicap, is the vision of his great Viking head and red beard protruding above sturdy forearms and rolled-up shirt-sleeves, as he leaned over his Westminster window-sill in the sunshine, at peace, for once, with the world.

The messenger of destiny for me was no such conspicuous figure, but a well-dressed little man, a Mr. Riley, whom I never saw again. He called at the office to guarantee and to get an estimate for a publication termed 'The Dial,' the work of two artist friends. To explain the scale and character of the production, he exhibited to me a large woodcut by Reginald Savage. Its power, and its surprising comprehension of Dürer, excited my keen admiration. At the mention of Dürer's name my visitor gave a perceptible jump, discussed the project with me most frankly, and was sent in due course the estimate he required. This was acknowledged a day later by a new figure, frail-looking, with a pointed auburn beard and wavy hair:—a Swinburne turned Little Minister one might think, seeing the top-hat, black Inverness cape and grave demeanour. It was Charles Ricketts, looking then much as he looked some forty years later, when I saw him for the last time. He brought with him further material for 'The Dial,' and after settling the details of production, invited me rather shyly, in Shannon's name and his own, to come and see them in The Vale.

He had given me careful directions, so that in due course I found the turning from King's Road, with its dirty white posts, and groped my way in darkness, down a slope, to a low house on the right among a few decrepit trees. Ricketts welcomed me at the door, led me up to be introduced to handsome, curly-haired Shannon, and then began to talk as I had never heard mortal talk before. Titchener at Brasenose had been brilliant, but his wit and eloquence seemed almost pedantic in comparison with the flood of lively comment on art and letters which now enchanted me. Incidentally I learned something about their house, which



had been Whistler's, their neighbours the De Morgans, their likes and many dislikes, and their own joint plans for the future. They showed me the work on which they were engaged, the things they were collecting, and when they had thus done the honours of the place, they turned to what I did myself. I had tried to draw but had made nothing of it. Then I must bring my stuff the next Saturday afternoon for them to see.

I did so, quaking. The two looked gravely through my poor bundle of little water-colours, now and then setting one aside. Then Ricketts spoke. 'Your things are quite accomplished, but you don't know what you're doing. This, for example, might have been a scrap by Whistler: that pile is worthless. You must learn what drawing means, and take up etching.' I protested that I knew nothing of the process. Ricketts insisted on showing me. From the back room he produced a copper-plate, poured some liquid ground over it, and sketched my head and shoulders. The plate was roughly bitten in my presence and the portrait revealed. I should like to have had a print of it as a reminder. Ricketts looked doubtfully at Shannon. 'It's not worth keeping,' said Shannon ruthlessly, and it was destroyed before my regretful eyes.

Nevertheless the encouragement of these brilliant beings gave a new zest to life. Buying some small plates and materials, I looked forward from my ledgers to the next week-end when I could make the great experiment. On the Saturday I etched one zinc plate from a sketch made on Wimbledon Common; on the Sunday I did a second, a memory of a machine-room interior. This last proved coarse and stupid: the Wimbledon study looked more promising, and was so well received at The Vale that I returned happy and determined to try something more elaborate. The next Saturday, I remember well, proved light and warm; I could see to draw detail, and the acid bit happily on the copper. The little view near Rotterdam came out just as I wished, except that some foreground

weeds made a blot on the design. When I took the plate to The Vale, Ricketts was quite excited, and insisted that I must go on etching as hard as I could, although what I had done was in part an accident. It might be years before I did anything so good again. It was.

My efforts to follow his advice were assisted, in some ways, by my mother's change of residence. She had never been well in London, and decided therefore to move to Richmond Hill, where, by the exceptional skill of Dr. John Williamson, she was restored to a measure of health such as no London specialist had dared to prognosticate. Richmond Hill was too remote for anyone earning his daily bread so intensively as I did. In consequence, a little panelled second floor at No. 3 Cowley Street, Westminster (now No. 2), for some five years accommodated my person and books; a tiny attic above housed luggage, canvases and an etching-press.

Meanwhile, at Ballantyne's, I was finding it unwise to be zealous overmuch. I got into one trouble by reporting an overcharge of 30 per cent. on some paper, and endangering some private commission; then into still worse trouble by putting into practice one of Mr. Hanson's own maxims, 'If a publisher shows you a manuscript, never let it leave your hands till you have got permission to estimate for it.'

My duties involved not only the making out of publishers' accounts, but also the collecting of them, with the settlement of any minor disputes over details. Some publishers were notorious hagglers. I can remember returning from a long tussle with Messrs. X, and being received quite graciously by the management because, in an account running to well over three figures, I had succeeded in settling with a rebate of no more than 3s. 6d.

On the fatal occasion I was collecting the account of Messrs. Longman, one of the most precious of the firm's customers; they paid cash quarterly. While the cheque was being got ready for me, I took the opportunity of looking in upon Mr. C. J. Longman, who had befriended me during the Rivington transfer, to ask him whether there happened

to be any new work for which Ballantyne's could estimate. 'Well,' said he, 'there is Chisholm's Gazetteer,' indicating a great bundle of brown paper on the floor. I thanked him warmly, hoisted the heavy cube on to my shoulder, collected the cheque, and staggered to Ludgate Hill and an omnibus. When, at last, I dumped the thing down on the floor at Tavistock Street, Mr. Hanson happened to be talking with the manager, and naturally asked what I had brought in. I explained; hoping for a little commendation, since it was a £1500 job. But he remarked, very coldly indeed, that he had heard of the book, and had intended to go and see about it himself next week. I was never again allowed to collect Longmans' account.

Progress, in fact, was strictly barred; though I was sufficiently trusted to be left in charge of the whole Press, and of the work for the far larger printing establishment in Edinburgh, for a fortnight in the summer when the principals were taking their holiday. But the barrage as regards myself was not unreasonable: another aspirant, my friend Service, possessing both solid private means and business capacity, had arrived in the office. Having acquired this junior string to his financial bow, Mr. Hanson, being naturally so politic that he avoided any final decision, could now conveniently dispense with me. Hence when Mr. John C. Nimmo, one of his publisher clients, needed assistance, my name was warmly recommended to his notice, and I returned to my original trade. My place as book-keeper fell to Service; he soon became as little satisfied with his prospects as I had been; joined the firm of Seeley and Co., and raised it to the position which it now holds. In after years, when Mr. Hanson began to feel the need of assistance, I could not sympathize much with his expressions of regret that none of his young men had been content to stay with him.

## CHAPTER IX

### JOHN C. NIMMO

(1892-1896)

Mr. Nimmo and his methods; 'remainders,' the 'Border Edition' of Scott; William Strang; our American colleagues; Sandy S—; Lord Ronald Gower; J. A. Symonds; attempt to work out a theory of painting; companions in Westminster; holidays at Wasdale and elsewhere; lost sketch-books; the Theatre and the Opera; business difficulties; resignation.

MOST business men, in some sense or other, lead double lives. My life between 1892 and 1896 became definitely tripartite. At Cowley Street I breakfasted, dined, read, etched, painted, boxed and slept. At King William Street I hearkened to the voice of John C. Nimmo, made estimates, read proofs and MSS., and wrote letters innumerable to printers, binders, booksellers, authors, artists and Americans, receiving the sum of £250 per annum for doing so. At The Vale, every Friday night, I sat in silent awe while the most brilliant talk I had ever heard darted, flashing and sparkling, over a world of art and letters quite unknown to my lodgings or my office. Years passed before I could establish any sort of relation between my earth-bound mentality and this empyrean of swift and lively spirits. Meanwhile I was thankful for permission to remain an unhelpful parasitic *attaché*, an obscure and lightless satellite, for mind and body were fully occupied in saving myself from becoming a burden upon my mother, whose means were already straitened. Moreover I was myself steadily sinking to the status of a poor relation, a favourite phrase with certain well-to-do connexions whom I could not altogether avoid. If I sometimes worked rather too hard, I did so, I believe, quite as much from the hope of disappointing those benevolent anticipations

of failure and dependence as from any more creditable motive.

Since the firm of John C. Nimmo, like the Ballantyne Press, is now a thing of the past, a short explanation of its history and nature may be excused.

John Cumming Nimmo, though a queer mixture of contrary qualities, was not a bad fellow. Genial and testy, shrewd and simple, sharp and lavish, by some easily flattered, to others incurably obstinate, he owed his modest success rather to energy and good luck than to methodical forethought. Some few years before I met him, he had left the Edinburgh firm of Nimmo, Hay and Mitchell to set up independently in London, in partnership with Mr. Bain, becoming sole owner of the business when Mr. Bain accepted an official appointment at Toronto. His method was diametrically opposed to that of the Rivingtons. The Rivingtons were content with steady returns, arriving automatically year after year; Nimmo made and took his profit at once. The Rivingtons neither sought nor required support from the booksellers: Nimmo relied largely upon booksellers' help and advice for shaping his own course.

But the booksellers whom Nimmo consulted were not the retailers of new books, then almost ruined by foolish competition in giving discounts to the public. His intimates were the second-hand booksellers, a relatively learned and prosperous body, in days when men had still the money and the space for libraries. Being the authorities whom collectors of books frequented and consulted, the experience of such booksellers could be of considerable value to any publisher who was willing to adapt his wares to the wants of their *clientèle*. Handsome library editions, limited editions, large-paper editions, for which the attraction of being 'Out of Print' could generally be claimed, were the needs of the moment, and to these Nimmo devoted his attention with considerable if fluctuating success.

Should a good standard book become exceedingly rare, he would reprint it, provided that the plates and similar essen-

tials could be bought from their previous owners. Now and then his optimistic temper led him to print too many copies, as he did with Stirling Maxwell's 'Annals of the Artists of Spain'; a mistake which would have involved him in a ruinous loss had not the mass of superfluous sheets been disposed of by a timely fire at the binders'. A happier investment was the series of Natural History books by the Rev. F. O. Morris. Having purchased the blocks and plates of 'British Birds,' 'Moths and Butterflies,' 'Nests and Eggs,' he was able to reprint them regularly and profitably, until the more scientific works of Lord Lilford and others rendered Morris obsolete. The words 'coloured by hand' had a certain magic about them for the half-educated public, and the painting of the cuts in these books, and the plates in certain sporting reprints, amounted at times to quite a respectable industry. This reprint business was supplemented by a trade in the remaining copies of standard books grown comatose or moribund. John Murray for some years was a regular source of supply. The results occasionally were curious. Among the 'remainders' thus purchased, bound up and resold at a reduced price, was Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 'Life of Titian.' When I wanted, a year later, to get a copy for myself, I found that the eager public demand for the 'remainder' had made the book a rarity more expensive than when it was first published.

Such derivative activities did not exhaust or satisfy Mr. Nimmo's ambition. He was genuinely fond of handsome books, and aspired to a place among the best London publishers in virtue of the quality of his products. That delightful, wizened cynic, Henry van Laun, had introduced him to the byways of Continental literature, and therewith to John Addington Symonds. Symonds began by translating the 'Memoirs of Count Carlo Gozzi.' But the Venetian theatre made much less appeal to the general public than did his next translation, 'The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini.' This reads as if it were itself an original work, and may well outlive all the translator's other

literary efforts. In 1892, when I came to King William Street, Symonds was engaged upon a new 'Life of Michelangelo Buonarroti,' to be produced in similar style. It was a scholarly product, but the author's critical insight was not equal to his rhetorical fluency, so that the repute of the book has not survived the passage of time. America in those days was a prosperous book-market, and the profit on the 'Cellini' and the 'Michelangelo' was materially swelled by the large editions which Messrs. Scribner purchased through their breezy London representative Lemuel W. Bangs.

Another American firm, Estes and Lauriat of Boston, was associated with Nimmo in a still greater enterprise:—the issue of the Waverley Novels in 48 volumes, edited by Andrew Lang, and illustrated with 288 etchings. It was the labour of preparing this 'Border Edition' that led to my services being requisitioned. Owing to the American copyright law, the text had to be printed from plates made in America, the proofs being read and re-read in London. The production of the etched illustrations was Nimmo's concern, and the first experiments made with 'Waverley,' 'Guy Mannering' and 'The Antiquary' were so feeble, being based chiefly on old engravings or pictures, that Mr. H. Macbeth-Raeburn had been called in to introduce new methods and new men.

Among the artists thus commissioned, his brother Robert Macbeth came first, to my thinking. His little plates, particularly the series in 'The Fortunes of Nigel,' display not only Macbeth's wonted spirit and vigorous rhythm, but unexpected qualities of humour and character, proving that in him the country possessed a really great illustrator. It is unlucky that his talent was not directed more frequently into that channel. The youthful D. Y. Cameron and William Strang were other notable contributors, and, at the very tail of the list, I came myself, being allowed by Macbeth-Raeburn to etch a plate for 'The Pirate,' a plate most heartily disliked by our American partners. Their favourite was the French etcher Lalauze; he was certainly a wonderful

craftsman. Our illustrator for 'Quentin Durward' had failed us at the eleventh hour: only a month was left for the designing and etching of a dozen plates. In desperation Nimmo wired to Lalauze; the commission was accepted and fulfilled to the day. A considerable proportion of the Scott etchings were reproductive, being made from wash drawings by well-known illustrators, of whom Wal Paget and William Hatherell were perhaps the most skilful. Comparison and criticism of these plates taught me much about the uses of the etched line; I learned still more from talks with Macbeth-Raeburn and Strang.

Strang's early etchings in the 'Portfolio' had been objects of admiration and collection since my Oxford days. His personality, now that I was privileged to know him, was no less invigorating than his work. He encouraged my humble attempts at drawing and painting, exhorted me to drop my niggling ways (what he called bot'ny), to use line and mass more broadly, and in 1893 backed my candidature for the Royal Society of Painter-Etchers. I was opposed, as an imitator of Rembrandt (!), and rejected by one vote, but had the consolation of hearing that Seymour Haden had been among my supporters. Strang's lessons sank rather slowly into my dull brain, but sink they did, and my artistic debt to his friendship is second only to that due to Ricketts and Shannon. The edition of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' containing his etchings, which Nimmo issued, has always seemed to me one of the most satisfactory and desirable of the firm's publications; much better than the volume of illustrations to 'Paradise Lost,' a theme less suited to Strang's racy genius, although the set contains in *The Creation of Eve* one veritable masterpiece.

The punctual issue every month of two volumes of Scott, in addition to other publications, would have involved some strain upon Nimmo's little staff, even if there had been no attendant difficulties. But our American colleagues were sharp men of business, charging so many extras to the joint account that we, in self-defence, had to do the same. Hence



arose an endless, acrimonious correspondence over details, the more comic and the more futile because each firm had to keep faith with its subscribers, and could not afford an actual rupture. So threats of repudiating bills continued to be met by threats of withholding illustrations, while the work went steadily forward. Nimmo understood the men with whom he was dealing. Neither Lauriat nor his manager Jackson (afterwards the well-known *impresario* of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*), on their visits to England, raised more than perfunctory complaints, and when the great final dispute was over, the Americans, to my surprise, dropping all their moral indignation, their resentful protests, complimented Nimmo on his handling of the business, admitted that they had met their match, and tried to get him to join them in a second and still larger venture of the same kind.

The mere mass of proof-reading involved was by itself considerable, and to cope with it a Scottish reader had been specially engaged. Sandy S—— became a friend from the day when I found him lying drunk on the floor of his room, and kicked and drenched him into presentability. Always a man of adventures, he bore a great scar on his face, a wedding present given with a champagne bottle by a smart lady whom he did not marry. Later, I fear, he got into more serious trouble.

Before Sandy came to Nimmo, he had worked at Spottiswoode's, and had been present at the dinner given to Dr. Spottiswoode on his retirement. One of the staff asked leave to read a poem he had composed for the occasion. It began:

‘Who is this man, so great and good,  
That bears the name of Spottiswoode?’

Dr. Spottiswoode was visibly flattered. But when the poem continued:

‘He gives us work to earn our bread.  
By doing this we are not dead.’

there was a roar of laughter, and the too veracious author was immediately suppressed. Sandy himself, being proud of his knowledge of Scottish dialects, was not invulnerable. I once asked him the meaning of the nonsense from 'The Bab Ballads'—'Hech, thrawfu' raltie, rorkie,' etc. Having puzzled over it solemnly for two days with his glossaries and dictionaries, he reported that he had found it to be 'a mer-re meaningless jingle.'

Lord Ronald Gowers's 'Joan of Arc' gave me my most troublesome piece of proof-reading. He had been introduced to us by Symonds, and when we remonstrated about the MS. with which we were landed, Symonds cynically replied that Lord Ronald was a Duke's son, and could not therefore be judged by ordinary standards. Though written with enthusiasm and some knowledge, the style of the work was so incredibly careless that mere correction was not nearly enough. I had to take it home and spend my evenings in rewriting it. But the author, far from resenting the changes, welcomed them gratefully, raised not a single objection, and was rewarded for his complaisance by the reviews, which greeted it as the best thing he had ever done. Rumour attributed Lord Ronald's proficiency in the field of sculpture also to the assistance of clever 'ghosts.' Yet his statue of *Lady Macbeth*, washing her hands, of which he showed me a cast at Trebovir Road, seemed to me remarkably fine,—an impression not due to my host's excellent Chambertin, for the bronze at Stratford-on-Avon is equally striking,—so fine, that the original creative impulse must have been his own, though the details may well have been revised, as in the 'Joan of Arc,' by another. We could hardly fail to have heard more of the 'ghost' if the *Lady Macbeth* had been ghost-work from start to finish. It is among the most effective products of the period.

Symonds's own 'Autobiography' was another source of trouble. The manuscript was deliberately outspoken on many matters which are usually handled with reticence, so that Horatio Brown, Symonds's friend and editor, exercised

little more than ordinary discretion in cutting out the most intimate self-revelations. But a straiter critic had then to take a hand. The proofs, already bowdlerized, were completely emasculated, so that frank 'Confessions,' which might have made some little stir in the world (indeed that was generally expected), emerged as pure commonplace. In their anxiety to be safe about ethical and physical peculiarities, the revisers overlooked two pleasant misprints, which I corrected just before the proofs went to press. One was a reference to 'my friend Mr. Goose'; the other included among the great satisfactions of a well-spent life 'the company of noblemen.'

Much of this proof-reading had to be done in the evening at Cowley Street, the day being otherwise engaged. But there were occasions when I could attend to my own affairs; the most important, of course, being the business of learning how to draw and to paint. Reynolds's 'Discourses' (the most encouraging thing ever written upon Art), Hogarth's 'Analysis of Beauty,' John Burnet's ponderous 'Treatise,' with Ricketts, Japanese prints and Strang, all superimposed upon Ruskin and Hamerton, made such an amorphous conglomeration of ideas and theories that it became necessary to think the whole thing out afresh, starting from first principles. With this intention, I laboriously composed several chapters of a pictorial eirenicon, a childish forerunner of 'The Science of Picture-Making.' At the same time, in 1893, I started painting little landscapes in oil, using only one brush, from sheer ignorance that real painters used several. On Sunday morning the programme was varied. Any friend who called might have his portrait painted, if he would only sit quite still for an hour or two. One obeyed my order so faithfully that, as he asseverated, the pattern of my cane-bottomed chair was impressed on his person for several days. His likeness, however, turned out unusually well.

Congenial company was never lacking in this Westminster backwater. Laurence Binyon lodged in Great College



LAURENCE BINYON  
after an etching by William Strang



Street; his bed, and all else in his room, being almost buried under review-books. He shared my enthusiasm for Strang, under whose guidance we both made essays in wood-engraving. Harold Child from Brasenose, Arthur Lowry from Eton, and the Rev. H. N. Hutchinson, author of 'Extinct Monsters,' were fellow-lodgers. Cochrane, the Herald, lived just opposite. To Barton Street, rather later, came my friend Cripps, and G. Mayer, now of Colnaghi's, but then engaged in mastering Dürer and Rembrandt on a diet of prunes, oranges and nuts.

The most impressive of all my visitors was an almost forgotten junior of my Canterbury days, A. H. Turner, now grown into a tall, dark and rather exciting young man. Entering the service of the Niger Company at the age of seventeen, he had quickly mastered the languages of West Africa and the Koran (the true key, he explained, to general intercourse), until he could pass anywhere as a native. As such he had travelled on foot to the then almost unknown city of Kano, and now was discussing plans for the future with Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. Turner had not overestimated his own capacity. When Benin was conquered, he was appointed its first Resident, and there fever brought his meteoric career to an end at the age of twenty-six.

For exercise indoors I relied upon boxing with footballers from St. Thomas's Hospital, and with my powerful friend Desborough Walford, one of whose blows I have reason to remember. It advanced under my too hasty guard like the buffer of a locomotive, caught me on the chin, and lifted me off my feet into the glass of a picture on the wall behind. Golf at Tooting Bec, among nursemaids and perambulators, though amusing, was found to waste valuable time. Long walks in the Home Counties had the doubtful advantage of setting me to work upon bright red tiles, green fields, fluffy trees and purple heather, totally unsympathetic material, over which I wasted much paint, paper and canvas. I tried also a few figure compositions, the most ambitious being a nude *Andromeda*, painted from my own bony person with

some difficulty and a looking-glass, who showed too many traces of her origin to have tempted even a sea-monster. When my friend Child was playing the part of an artist in Harry Paulton's Company at the Strand Theatre, the contents of my attic were requisitioned to furnish his stage studio, and so appeared in public for the first time. But even in that not too exacting environment, I noticed that poor Andromeda was allowed to show to the audience only her canvas back.

In May 1893, being granted a sudden holiday, I went alone to the Wasdale Hotel, in search of fresh air and exercise. I had lost a stone in weight since leaving Oxford, and had been more than once in the doctor's hands. Old Will Ritson was dead, but under Tyson, his successor at the hotel, the simple fare and accommodation (O the beefsteaks and the bathroom!) were unchanged. The company there was of the very best, climbers all, but my attraction, at first, was the fishing. With the idea that the most inaccessible waters would provide the best sport, I dragged a 12-foot fly rod up to Scoat Tarn, with no result. Sprinkling Tarn also was drawn blank, but here the day was hot, I had taken Sty Head at a run, and my temper was up. The tarn looked shallow and not over-chilly; I would see whether the place did really contain the trout mentioned in Jenkinson's guide-book. Plunging in, I swam down, exploring the depths in every direction, only to find them thickly, incredibly thickly, populated with large minnows. So disgusted was I that on my way back I never troubled to cast a fly on Sty Head Tarn, which really does contain trout. In the becks I did little better, till it occurred to me to get up at five in the morning. Then I began at once to catch respectable fish. On Wastwater they seemed to take only between 8 and 10 o'clock at night. Hiring a tub of a boat from Strands, I rowed it up to the head of the lake, and went out trailing the fly every night after dinner, always catching fish, and having the rest of the day free for walking and climbing.

Among the visitors to the hotel was a frail Mr. Baum-

gartner, over eighty years of age, who had been one of the very first to climb the Pillar Rock, and was still a mountaineering enthusiast. He alarmed us one day in the momentary absence of his nurse, by illustrating, between the doorposts of the hotel, the proper method of climbing a rock-chimney, and attaining by tremulous gymnastics a height from which a slip would certainly have been fatal. After spending one unsuccessful afternoon on the Pillar, uninstructed and by myself, I was taken there again by a queer, friendly, learned, loquacious Rabelaisian parson who sported a rope and an ice-axe. Being duly roped, I passed the Slab and Notch, my previous point of stoppage, at the cost of a few biting comments upon my caution. But when my critic had stretched a leg on the Slab to follow me, he paused long, and then withdrew it, saying, 'My nerve is not what it was'; so I crept up to the summit alone. After verifying Mr. Baumgartner's place at the beginning of the old notebook in the cairn, I was scribbling my name in its successor, when a loud clap of thunder crashed overhead. Terror of my eminence on that isolated rock ousted all terror of the cliffs around me. I slithered and scrambled down into safety and torrential rain, with a speed which proved that the difficulties had been mostly those of imagination. My clerical friend, at dinner, insisted on a bottle of hock, to celebrate appropriately the fact that we had climbed the Pillar.

In the course of my scrambles on Scawfell, and elsewhere, I made a number of careful little drawings, but they mostly contained only details without substance. In consequence they proved of little practical service compared with a couple of hasty blots of effects noticed when fishing in the early morning,—clouds rolling off the Pillar Mountain and Great Gable. These two subjects had all the massive grandeur and simplicity of tone which the Surrey landscape lacked, and the thought of them drew me back again and again to the North. When I returned, half a stone heavier, from that strenuous fortnight among our little but very real mountains, even the larger buildings of London looked strangely *petite*.



The subjects collected during the next two years, 1894 and 1895, were almost immediately lost to me with the sketch-books which contained them. One book was left in a railway carriage, and the finder must have callously disregarded the plea for its return which I had written plainly at the end. The second not only bore my address, but the generous offer of 2s. 6d. to the finder; an offer which failed to tempt the appreciative workman who filched the book from my Cowley Street lodgings when they were being repainted. In addition to notes made during two trips on the Continent, which I have now almost completely forgotten, these books included a number of rather elaborate studies in Norfolk, in Constable's country and in the Ullswater district.

The loss of the East Anglian group I particularly regret. Norwich at that time hardly differed from the Norwich of John Crome. To row on the Yare, the Wensum or the Bure among picturesque tumble-down buildings, past slopes crowned with old towers, windmills or solemn shadowy trees, with reedy flats below and expanses of water providing foregrounds, was to discover theme after theme for designs of a kind inconceivable in the busy modern city, with its big up-to-date hotels, its roaring clanging tramways, its blazing arc-lamps. The windy beauty of Dedham Vale was another surprise, so exactly did it resemble Constable's pictures and sketches. Only at Manningtree, Langham and Boxted could I find good subjects which he had overlooked, and which I could therefore misuse without seeming to be a mere imitator.

Of all the Continental sketches that thus went astray I can now recall only one;—a study of the solemn, tumbled boulders at Apremont. But there were also several experiments in simplification and vivid colour the loss of which was really a nuisance, since their partial success might have shortened the road of escape from dingy realism. The Ullswater sketches, being made in monotonously fine weather, were less inspiring: indeed the weather drove me to other amusements.

At night I wasted hours in trolling on the lake for *salmo*

*ferox*; a fish which (confound Mr. Cholmondeley Pennell!) does not exist there. By day I scrambled over the fells, finding the crags above Mardale to be splendid practice-ground for an amateur, and had a run up and down Helvellyn, in under two hours, on my way to Windermere. A second visit to the Lakes was even less fruitful as regards painting, for I spent all my time over some imitation trout, made out of discarded etching-plates, and carefully coloured in oil. One of these, by some magical accident, swayed and swooped through the water exactly like a disabled fish. At Lakeside it caught two pike in the first ten minutes, and then hooked a three-pound trout, which broke the trace with a final kick on the edge of the landing-net. When he slowly vanished into the depths, the copper fish still hanging vertical from his jaw, my fortune vanished too. All the similar baits proved useless. I could never recapture the secret of that one irresistible curve, that enchanting wobble.

Pressure of work left few opportunities for diversions in London. A ragged, flickering film of the Corbett-Fitzsimmons fight, at the Westminster Aquarium, introduced me to the 'movies,' and to the excitement of real heavy-weight boxing. The Granville Dicksons favoured the Court Theatre and took me with them several times to laugh at Mrs. John Wood. Arthur Dickson, when visiting London, would rouse me out of my Westminster seclusion to see Vesta Tilley, Bessie Bellwood and that lot at the Tivoli; 'Mrs. Ebbsmith,' 'A Woman of No Importance' and 'Lady Windermere's Fan' at the Haymarket, or 'The Importance of Being Earnest' at the St. James',—surely the best farce of its age? Oscar Wilde's dialogue, at this time, seemed to infect all London. For 'Lady Windermere's Fan' we could only get seats in the gallery, the rest of the house being crowded. At that distance from the stage it was not easy to catch all that was said. Presently a girl behind us remarked, rather petulantly, 'One can't hear anything up here.' 'Oh well!' replied her companion, 'that is the privilege of the gods.' My friend Cripps, too, would appear now and then

with tickets for such things as 'Madame Sans-Gêne' with Réjane, or 'Hamlet' with Sarah Bernhardt. This was an extraordinary performance, Sarah being the only Hamlet I have seen who was unmistakably *royal*, a prince of the blood from first to last. Ophelia was played by a frail little flapper, whose end seemed sheer child-murder, a deed of pity and fear overshadowing all that followed, for which the pile of corpses at the last seemed the one conceivable expiation. When the part of Ophelia is taken by some experienced and possibly mature leading lady, the need for any such dramatic atonement does not arise, and Hamlet's death appears quite unmerited bad luck.

Talk about Wagner brought me early to Covent Garden, where the Overture to 'Tannhäuser,' heard for the first time, so thrilled and exhausted me that I was deaf to Maurel and the rest. 'Lohengrin' with the brothers de Reszke provided another sensation. Jean looked and sang as a semi-divine hero should do. Never was more perfect phrasing, but he lounged through his part with the easy swagger of a spoiled stage-darling, to the destruction of all dramatic veracity. Max Alvary in 'Siegfried' was really more convincing. Not only did he look the part, but the final scene with Fräulein Klafsky as Brünnhilde was sung with a fire and passion which Siegfrieds can rarely summon up after the two gruelling acts which come before. Being totally ignorant of music, I could enjoy these performances only in the light of the sensations which they induced, but I was interested many years later to find that Claude Phillips counted this Alvary-Klafsky combination as the finest rendering of 'Siegfried' which he had ever heard in all his long experience of English and Continental productions.

Apart from these occasional treats, my excursions from the daily round of work seldom went beyond evening visits to the grill-room at South Kensington Museum, with its big bearded cook, its sizzling chops and steaks, followed by a stroll round the almost deserted galleries under the hissing uncertain arc-lamps, or to the quiet Library. Some know-

ledge presumably was assimilated in this desultory fashion: later the visits grew more regular and definite in their purpose. The evening opening of Galleries and Museums may never attract great crowds; yet the few who do go are sure to be real students, and some justification for the expense involved. In the Library, for example, I met my old school-fellow Carr-Bosanquet, already the possessor, as it seemed to me, of an exceptional knowledge of Greek Antiquities, and then standing for a junior assistant's place in the British Museum. But in the examination (they manage these things more sensibly now) he was ploughed in some such subject as Quadratic Equations, only to rise a few years later, after a series of distinguished achievements, to the Directorship of the British School at Athens.

My one other diversion, the Friday evenings passed with Ricketts and Shannon, had such a direct connexion with the years to follow, that any comment upon them may be postponed until the remaining phases of my work with Nimmo have been briefly sketched. Memory plays queer tricks and, but for the discovery of an old bundle of letters, I should certainly have misrepresented the history of this unsatisfactory time.

The agreement with Nimmo stipulated that I should act as manager for one year, and then be admitted to a junior partnership. At the end of the year he insisted on a postponement. The Waverley Novels and other books had proved exceedingly profitable, and he said, quite frankly, that he did not see why I should share in the benefit from schemes which I had not helped to originate. As I had worked like a horse at them all, this seemed rather hard. Yet I did not like breaking with him and being once more out of a job, so I gave way. Worse things were to follow.

When the time did come for drawing up a partnership agreement, I had to see about getting the capital originally promised, 'either without interest or at a nominal rate.' The sum was £2000, which had previously been lent to Nimmo, when I came to him, at 4 per cent. interest. My

cousin's solicitors informed me that the rate would now be 5 per cent., and that the amount should be covered by an Insurance Policy, making 8 per cent., or more, in all. The proposal shocked and angered me, not only because acceptance meant slavery for years if not for life, a perpetuity of indebted poor-relationship, but still more by its contrast to the friendly and generous treatment I had hitherto received, and had been led to expect. After consulting my mother, her family solicitors and Nimmo, I rejected the proposal. Nimmo was prepared to keep me on as manager at my old salary, and offers were made in other quarters for providing me with the sum required. Then the solicitors reopened negotiations on the 5 per cent. basis. To have held out would have involved a family quarrel, so I accepted the loan on those terms and became a very junior partner.

Nimmo at this time was involved in litigation with Messrs. Quantin of Paris, over certain imperfect copies of a sumptuous work on Sèvres Porcelain which he had bought from them. He obtained a judgment, by consent, in the King's Bench, but had no means of enforcing it except by further proceedings in Paris, which his lawyer unhappily encouraged. Direct liability for this interminable lawsuit I was resolute to avoid; indeed the cost of proceeding vainly from one French court to another eventually swallowed up most of the profit which Nimmo had made in the preceding years. More personal difficulties arose over an elaborate work on 'Naval and Military Trophies' which my uncle Richard Holmes introduced to us. The material for illustration was an elaborate series of water-colour drawings by William Gibb, R.S.A., really most able things; round these the battle raged. The cost of making facsimiles by chromolithography would be very great; more, far more, than I thought we should risk on a single book. Nimmo, always fond of fine things, would be content with nothing less, rejecting with contumely the more economic scheme of reproduction by copper-plates printed in colour. Finally I agreed to abide by the opinion of the booksellers who would

handle the publication. This was reported to be entirely favourable, and I gave my consent accordingly. But when the book appeared, the subscriptions were barely one-fifth of what was expected. I made private inquiry and found that dubious advance reports had been edited for my benefit, unfavourable ones suppressed. A lucky *coup* by our clever traveller ultimately reduced the loss to moderate dimensions, but my confidence was badly shaken.

There were further reasons for anxiety. My mother, wishing that I should not be too greatly indebted to what now seemed a grudging source of support, had taken over one-half of my £2000 share in the concern. If by any further mischance of business that sum should be diminished or lost, her sole means of living would be imperilled. Yet all my attempts to introduce new and less risky elements into the firm's programme were met with a stubborn conservatism against which it was vain to contend. 'What had sold in the past would continue to sell.' The smallest change at last came to involve long hours, nay days, of persuasion, as trying to the temper of both parties as they were costly in point of time. No business carried on in such conditions could prosper.

Yet the alternative was disheartening; to confess frankly to failure, to give up the results, such as they were, of years of exceptionally hard work, and to start all over again. To be once more 'on the streets' might be no engaging prospect, yet could it really be as intolerable as the burden of my present apprehensions? I had the chance of retiring at Midsummer 1896 if I chose to take it, and went accordingly to Richmond, to consult my mother, on whose good sense I could rely. After hearing the two sides of the case, she considered me to be so badly worried that I ought to take the risk of leaving.

Having agreed to this desperate plunge, I proceeded to join a party on the river, and in their company rowed up to some islet or other for a picnic tea. As we were boiling the kettle, my hostess recognized a girl in another group of

picnickers. She came across to us for a few minutes. In the course of casual talk I heard a question, 'Have you done any palmistry of late?' I had always wondered whether there was any truth at all in these pseudo-sciences, so summoned up courage to ask this total stranger whether she would be so good as to look at my hand, and held it out. She took it, thought over it a moment, and then said, 'Well, you are making, or are about to make, the greatest change in your life.' When I asked the reason for this unexpected guess at truth, she at once showed me the mark upon which she relied, and expressed no surprise on being told that, just two hours before, I had decided to give up my present profession.

Writing the fatal letter was made no easier by the receipt of a very cheerful and friendly note from Nimmo, who was away fishing Loch Laggan, accompanied by a present of trout. But it had to be done, and he took the announcement very well, merely asking me to stay on for a little until outstanding details of business could be cleared up. I had known for a month or two that Ricketts and Shannon found the starting of their little shop in Warwick Street to be unexpectedly troublesome, and that the manager (appointed at my suggestion) was leaving them. In consequence they were glad to have my help to put their affairs in order while I looked about for another job. So the reward of seven years' really hard work at publishing and printing came to be a salary of £80 a year, and a place behind the counter of a tiny shop.

## CHAPTER X

### THE VALE PRESS

(1896-1903)

Ricketts and Shannon; their friends and ideals; my literary and artistic education; Oscar Wilde; 'The Sphinx' and 'Salome'; move from The Vale to Beaufort St.; W. L. Hacon; the Vale Press started; the shop in Warwick St.; John Lane; the sport of collecting; impressions of Italy—Ricketts and Clutton-Brock.

RICKETTS and Shannon during the first few evenings at The Vale told me almost all about themselves which I was ever to know. Shannon, fresh, plump and curly-haired, was actually the senior of the two. At St. John's, Leatherhead, he had some repute as a footballer; then he became a teacher at the Croydon Art School, 'with heaps of friends until Ricketts quarrelled with them.' It was difficult to believe that Ricketts in the spring of 1892, with his high forehead, pointed beard and intellectual precocity, was only twenty-five. He talked upon art, letters and life with the conviction and shrewdness of complete maturity. Of his early days he said little, except that he had disappointed his father by not proving an athlete and a lover of field sports, and that much of his boyhood had been spent in France, his spiritual home. He and Shannon had become friends at Croydon, had started life together in the Kennington Road, and were now settling down to an agreed programme which had in it something of the heroic.

Shannon, they decided, was to be the great painter. He had already exhibited with some credit at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1887, and two of these early products—*Will he come in?*, figuring, as they say, a mammoth, red and angry at the edge of an ice-bound pool, wherein shivered sundry



apprehensive specimens of primeval man, and a smaller panel, *Benaiah killing the Lion*,—still occupied places of dishonour in a back room at The Vale. But Shannon was not to exhibit again until he appeared as the complete and undeniable master, upon whose princely income Ricketts then proposed to live in ease for the rest of his life. Until that great day came Shannon's painting would be done in private, watched and criticized by Ricketts alone, and the painter would work for their common welfare only when collaboration was required, or necessity compelled. It was upon Ricketts that the main burden was laid of providing for immediate wants, by drawing illustrations, advertisements or anything else which would bring in a little money.

Ricketts told me how once in Bond Street he was drawing some ladies' stockings in a shop, for a catalogue of such wares. The pattern of one specimen did not show clearly. 'Would you like to see it on?' asked the manageress, to his great embarrassment, until he found that only a lay-figure leg was to be shown to him. Pen-drawings, in the style of Edwin Abbey, were a further source of income. One of these caught the eye of Leighton, who ascertained Ricketts's address, asked him to call, and commissioned a drawing of any subject he pleased, for five pounds, with the remark (rather touching in the mouth of a famous and popular P.R.A.), 'I'm afraid you won't care for my work, but I am interested in yours.' The resultant drawing, placed by the President with two other favourites, 'my Walter West and my Anning Bell,' represented *Oedipus and the Sphinx*. At the Leighton sale Ricketts repurchased this delicate and elaborate specimen of his early style: it now belongs to Sir William Rothenstein.

Though Sturge Moore the poet, and the maker of some fine original woodcuts, remained the most intimate friend of the couple at The Vale, Reginald Savage at one period did, I think, more work in their company. I still possess a little drawing of Ricketts, with a narcissus drooping from his hand, being taken for a walk between a dishevelled





### THE PIPING TIMES OF PEACE

The evening of August 25, 1893. A Discussion about the Theatre.

Drawn by Ricketts.



J. C. NIMMO AFTER LUNCHING A CUSTOMER

Drawn by the author

Savage and an authoritative top-hatted Shannon. As an artist Savage displayed exceptional talent. His woodcut of *Behemoth*, which had so impressed me at Ballantyne's, was not more masterly than his pen-and-ink drawings in the Pre-Raphaelite manner, of which specimens may be found in 'The Dial.' Savage, however, could not remain content with the meagre rewards which attend original design and scrupulous workmanship. To Ricketts's regret, he drifted off to make a living as an illustrator in a manner less exacting and much better paid.

At first Ricketts and Shannon were often to be found alone, and in long evenings with them I was introduced to a literature and art very unlike the canonical classics of my schooldays. Baudelaire and Verlaine, Huysmans and Villiers de L'Isle Adam, with Forain, Puvis and Gustave Moreau for pictorial accompaniment, were deities I had now to reckon with, and try to reconcile privately with my older Olympians. All Ricketts's enthusiasm, however, failed to inspire me with his sense of the high place in life which the Theatre should occupy. Indeed a melancholy reminder of my rudeness in opposing him on this point remains in a little caricature. I sit with glaring eyes. I smoke a colossal curly pipe. With a monstrous arm I hit Shannon on the nose, while Ricketts weeps into a dish on the floor, flattened out by a no less monstrous foot in a spiked boot. These talks would last for hours. Then, towards one in the morning, Shannon would disappear and return bearing a big tray with rolled tongue, bread and butter, quince jam (a speciality of these meals) and great cups of steaming cocoa. Surely no clerk was ever so fortunate in his friends!

My kindly, worldly old cousin Mrs. Toynbee (Arnold's mother) frequently received me at Queen Anne's Mansions. I remember finding her there on Sunday afternoons, dozing, propped up in her great chair, with some big serious book on the reading-desk before her, and a French novel on her lap underneath. She was seriously alarmed by what she regarded as my descent into Bohemia. She had known

Rossetti and his circle, and said that there was too much champagne about Bohemia for her liking. When I told her about the cocoa the old lady was reassured, and a little disappointed.

Ricketts had for some years worked with Oscar Wilde as an illustrator and a designer of bindings. Wilde, now engaged upon 'The Sphinx' and 'Salome,' became for a time a constant visitor at The Vale, and with his visits the evenings there assumed a new character. Personally he was a surprise. Knowing him only by repute as an aesthete, and having met at Oxford a languid specimen of the breed in brown velvet and knee-breeches, I was prepared for a super-Postlethwaite, conceited and affected. Instead I was introduced to a big handsome man, well groomed and well dressed, whose manner to Ricketts tempered laughing assurance with so much friendship and respect as to be immediately attractive. That Wilde was kindly and good-natured was no less evident than that he bubbled over with wit, did not take enough exercise, and would soon be in danger of growing fat. He came to read the manuscript of 'The Sphinx,' which Ricketts was to illustrate and bind. The impression he left on me was of one who had worked much harder than he pretended to do, whose genius was fanciful and quick to assimilate, rather than original or profound. There was too, I thought, a genuine sincerity, oddly at variance with the lightness of his talk, in his voice as he read the conclusion, dismissing the false tempter:

'Go thou before, and leave me to my crucifix  
Whose pallid burden, sick with pain, watches the world with  
wearied eyes,  
And weeps for every soul that dies, and weeps for every  
soul in vain.'

But when discussion started I could find nothing more polite or apposite to say than that the metre was surely that of 'In Memoriam'? 'No,' said the author, 'it is printed quite differently.' This may account for what followed. It was summer and the windows were wide open. When

Ricketts bade farewell to Wilde at the door below, I could not help hearing my name mentioned as a new friend of theirs. 'Yes,' said Wilde, 'quite nice, but SO dull.' 'No,' replied Ricketts bravely, 'he is really quite intelligent, but most horribly overworked.'

On the next occasion Wilde and I happened to leave together, and I walked with him as far as the corner of Tite Street, he asking me about my work, and talking pleasant, unanswerable nonsense all the time. A more instructive evening was spent in discussing 'Salome.' This was conceived as a fantastic *jeu d'esprit*, in which elements suggested by Maeterlinck, Flaubert and the bejewelled ritualism of Gustave Moreau were paraded and parodied. 'What are the wild beasts that are howling?' is asked at the outset. 'It's the Jews discussing their religion' is the reply. Wilde also stressed the absurdity of 'And I will give you a flower, Narraboth, a little *green* flower,' until Ricketts upset his complacency by saying that some flowers really were green. Then he talked of the appropriate stage-setting, rich, dim backgrounds with the Jews all in yellow, Iokanaan in white, Herod in deep blood-red, and Salome herself in pale green like a snake. On another evening he brought round Beardsley's newly completed drawings. Ricketts was enthusiastic about their accomplishment, praising the more generously perhaps because he would like to have illustrated the play himself.

He certainly understood Wilde's intentions far better than Beardsley, whose Salome is no idolized, wilful princess in a remote Oriental palace, but a jaded Cyprian *apache* from a music-hall promenade. The choice of Beardsley was unlucky, too, for Wilde himself. Beardsley's art was already so generally associated in the Victorian mind with ideas of a veiled priapism, that even his most innocent designs were searched for some sinister meaning. 'Salome' thus obtained an undeserved repute for hidden depravities, which did the author no good when times of trouble came, while for the hieratic atmosphere which should have invested its presenta-

tion on the stage, there was substituted a Grand Guignol animalism. Beardsley himself I met but once, and then his clear disdain for my humble self displeased me less than his affected and casual attitude towards Ricketts. But there could be no denying his genius as a draughtsman. His illustrations to 'The Rape of the Lock' still seem to me incomparable.

The last appearance of Wilde at The Vale which I remember was also the most brilliant. Walter Sickert was there, boyish, clean-shaven, aureoled with a mass of blond hair, playing with a crinolined doll and flashing out now and then with some lively repartee; Steer sat by me in monumental silence; while Ricketts, perched on the edge of the table, engaged Wilde in a long verbal combat. So swiftly came parry and *riposte*, that my slow brain could only follow the tongue-play several sentences behind, and cannot remember a word of what passed, except 'Oh! nonsense, Oscar!' from Ricketts, although it lives in memory as the most dazzling dialogue which I was ever privileged to hear.

Success as a playwright soon left Wilde little time for The Vale. I saw him no more, but laughed with all London at his comedies, and at the parody of his talk (too slow, solemn and stilted) in 'The Green Carnation.' Then came the amazing sequels, the postcard, the libel action and the trial; a nightmare for which nothing had prepared us. Much of the evidence, no doubt, was dubious, but Wilde was ill-advised in bringing into Court a type of case which our conventions (with at least as much sense as hypocrisy) prefer to settle quietly in another fashion. The very cleverness of his repartees to Carson aggravated the error by appearing to defend it. In the light of after years I am inclined to think the truth was somewhat as follows. All Wilde's earlier plots, from 'The Fisherman and his Soul' to 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' and 'The Sphinx,' are concerned with the same thesis:—the temptations of the world and the flesh, balanced against the inevitable corruption and death of the soul that gives way to them. Had the author played so long

in imagination on the brink of dangerous experiences that, when success and good living had sapped his self-control, he yielded to curiosity, and stepped at last over the edge, as many have done before with less catastrophic results? It may be so. My memory remains that of a kindly and most brilliant man, who did and said nothing whatever which could give offence to the least in his company.

Ricketts and Shannon meanwhile were making two essays in book-production. 'Daphnis and Chloe,' the earlier of the two, was deliberately begun under a strong influence from the 'Hypnerotomachia.' In the later portions of the book the designs become more personal; that representing *Venus and Anchises* is a pattern of singular beauty, *The Wedding Feast of Daphnis and Chloe* has the additional interest of containing a portrait-group. On the extreme right the artists are shown, Ricketts, Shannon, Sturge Moore, Lucien Pissarro, Reginald Savage; the figure standing behind them is Mr. Riley, and on the opposite side of the table to the artists (the opposition was deliberate) sits an unfamiliar Holmes. As Ricketts sat at work among us one evening, some remark made him rock with laughter, and I heard him say, 'Oh damn! I've run the graver through Holmes's moustache. It must come out.' And out it came. In 'Hero and Leander' the Venetian influence upon the design has vanished; the border to the title-page exhibiting the blend of rhythmic involution with lively spirit which was to characterize all Ricketts's future work of the same kind. The exquisite, abstract beauty of the vellum binding is no less prophetic.

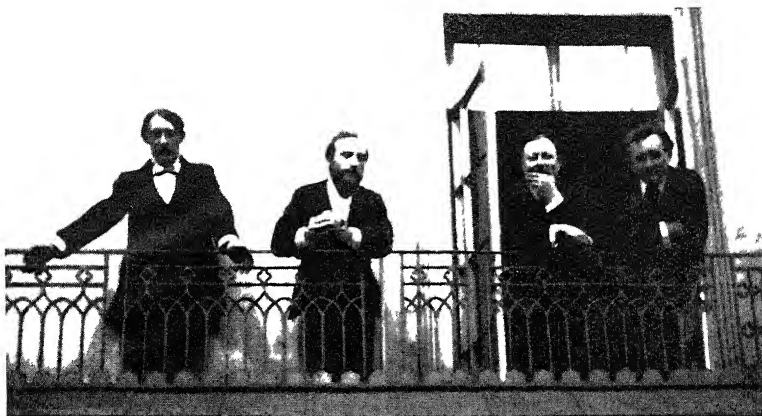
In 1894 the artists moved from The Vale to 31 Beaufort Street, where the number of their visitors increased. Lucien Pissarro (the gentlest surely of professed Anarchists) delighted them alike by his wood-engravings and his engaging talk. Shannon had done a pastel in the hatched manner of Besnard. 'How peautiful! It is joost like voolvarks' was the alleged comment. And to me, 'Your work will always be interesting because it is sincere; but ze artist is *borrn* an



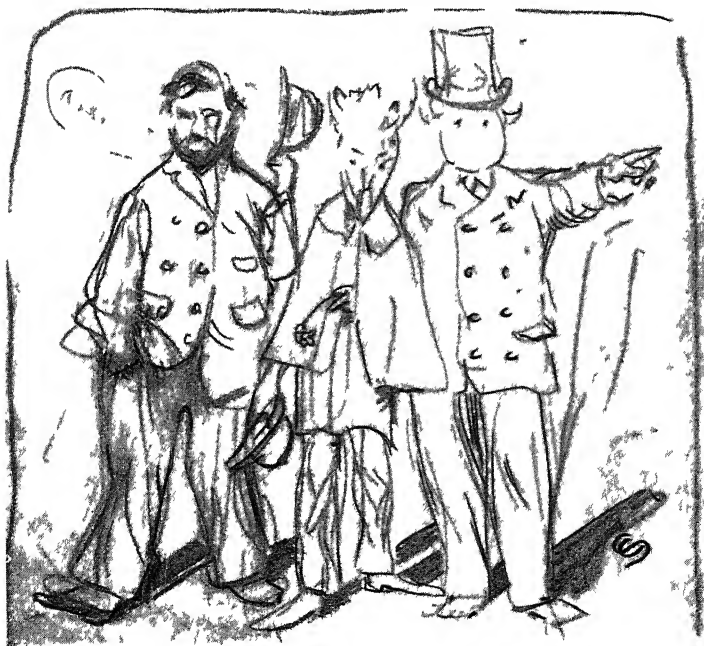
artist.' Fortunately I had no illusions on that subject. Pissarro's father Camille, the famous Impressionist, a noble patriarchal figure, and Alphonse Legros, were the chief representatives of the older generation; Conder, to me at least, the most curiously attractive of the juniors.

For nearly an hour on one occasion, he held me with a talk on the technique of painting on leather, detailed with a dreamy charm which rendered every moment enchanting, although leather-painting was none of my business. He laid particular stress on the need for probity in the art, for the use of the most permanent materials, speaking with such apparent conviction that I was completely hypnotized, and could not believe for years that he himself was utterly unscrupulous in his own methods. It is something to have seen the superb early products of that genius, before the pigments had faded to mere dull stains, and the material beneath them had rotted away. No succeeding generation will understand our admiration for the exquisite symphonies in colour which Conder produced during the middle 'nineties. Their fame was written in aniline dye, and his subsequent work in more solid materials is but a tragic parody of their enchanting, their audacious refinement.

While D. S. MacColl, Roger Fry, Max Beerbohm and others, including Leonard Smithers, in more than one sense the most curious of publishers, with his languid h-less twang and limp wet fingers, paid occasional calls at Beaufort Street, Will Rothenstein became a visitor both constant and conspicuous. His experiences in Paris and at Oxford, his acquaintance with almost all the well-known figures of the time, his ready tongue, his clever paintings and lithographs, combined unexpectedly with something of the lively, irresponsible schoolboy. Only now and then did these light-hearted moods reveal a trace of the self-critical spirit which was to dominate his work in after years. With him sometimes came his fiancée, pretty, smiling, fair-haired Alice Kingsley, or a sturdy genial friend in a dinner-jacket, W. Llewellyn Hacon.



CONDER, RICKETTS, HACON AND SHANNON  
 Photographed at the Vale, 1893



RICKETTS TAKEN FOR A WALK BY SAVAGE AND SHANNON  
 Drawn by Shannon, 1892



Of an old East Anglian family, the son of a successful barrister, Hacon had passed through Beaumont, New Inn Hall and Balliol, and had played polo for the University before his career at Oxford came to an end. A tour on the Continent with a tutor resulted in enlistment as a private in an Austrian cavalry regiment, with which he served through one winter in a mountain depot. Redeemed in due course by his family, he practised for a time at the bar, but his interest in art, letters and life, coupled with his skill at games (he was a scratch golfer), soon diverted his activities. He was admirable company, being as ready to defend the mysteries of Roman Catholic doctrine as to describe duelling with the sabre, and had taken the house in The Vale when Ricketts and Shannon left it. His wife, a Miss Bradshaw, was much admired by all the artistic colony of the day for her beauty and good nature. Rothenstein, having recorded her attractiveness in an admirable drawing, now enlisted Hacon's sympathy for an idea which Ricketts had long cherished, of setting up as a printer and publisher with type and decorations of his own designing.

The two previous books which Ricketts and Shannon had produced, and which had been issued by Elkin Matthews and John Lane, were printed in commercial founts, and these, though the best available, did not fulfil Ricketts's exacting ideal. The true 'Vale Press' books were to be of his own design from cover to cover. Hacon generously agreed to contribute £1000 to the scheme, with some vague understanding as to a half-share in the profits, and the year 1895 was devoted to preparing type, woodcut initials and blocks. A little shop was taken in Warwick Street, an obscure offshoot of Regent Street, which disappeared with the rebuilding of the Quadrant: Shannon painted a charming signboard of 'The Dial' to hang over the door, and the place was opened in the spring of 1896 with Mr. E. Le Breton Martin as manager. In the summer Martin found more remunerative work on a big daily paper and, as

related elsewhere, I offered to fill the gap for the time being, having indeed no other employment.

The Bibliography of the Vale Press issued by Ricketts in 1904 renders it unnecessary to discuss the books in detail, especially since my primary concern was with the commercial side of the venture. Concern is no inappropriate word. When I first came to Warwick Street, and studied the accounts with Macgregor, the pleasant, efficient office-boy, the result alarmed me. The original £1000 had all been spent, and I had to get another £50 forthwith from Hacon, merely to keep things going. Ricketts had attempted to sell his books in person to friendly booksellers who, after exasperating him by their criticisms, had extracted such discounts from his helplessness as no professional publisher could afford. I was no trained traveller myself, but there was nothing for it but to make a round of the London shops, and reduce their allowance to a reasonable and uniform rate. Although a year or more passed before I could take a new book into a shop door without a preliminary stroll outside to summon up the courage to enter, the booksellers, for the most part, soon became friends, who actually appeared glad to see me, especially when the book I brought was sure to go 'Out of Print' at once. I was greatly helped by the confidence of my chiefs, being allowed, for the first time, an absolutely free hand in finance and the details of negotiation;—so much so that once when Ricketts, in my absence, wished to draw some money from Barclays, the Bank hesitated about cashing his cheque. They had seen no signature but mine.

In spite of bright green paint and Shannon's signboard, the shop at Warwick Street remained rather a dismal little hole, though lighted occasionally by visits from Whistler, Mrs. Morris, still stately and sibylline in a superb old age, and many other well-known personages, including the present Chancellor of the Exchequer. Whistler wished us to become agents for his pictures and prints, but Ricketts managed to evade the proposal, fearing that any business contact between

Whistler and myself would result in murder. We were always a little embarrassed by the unwashing personality of our landlord, a Jew tailor, and his rather formidable wife, as well as by lodgers of another ancient profession on the upper floors. When our tenancy expired in 1899, I was thankful to find quarters at 17 Craven Street, Strand, less accessible perhaps to great personages, but certainly so to minor irritants.

About the same time a fire at the Ballantyne Press destroyed, *inter alia*, the woodcut initials and engraved decorations upon which Ricketts had spent five busy years. The loss was irreparable, and set a limit to what the Vale Press could expect to do in the future. We were insured for £500. After studying the policy, I calculated the loss in two ways, one based on the actual cost of the things destroyed, the other on the cost of replacement. Both came to within £25 of the insurance total, and in approaching the Fire Office I deemed it prudent to produce the former, as being slightly the smaller of the two. It seemed a good omen that the clerk summoned from a high stool to usher me into the managerial sanctum was none other than B., who twenty-one years earlier held third place among our Canterbury bullies. When the manager had inspected my estimate, he remarked that cost of replacement would be preferable as a basis for payment. But on my promptly producing the second detailed schedule, he decided to give me a cheque for the first amount, adding grimly that if we wished to renew the insurance he would be glad if we would approach some other office.

The issue of the Vale Shakespeare entailed a contract with John Lane for an American edition. Lane, then and ever after, was particularly kind to me, but the authors and artists whose work he accepted or commissioned were emphatic as to his skill in driving a bargain. I spent a whole night accordingly in calculating costs, this way and that, and reducing the results to a shirt-cuff formula, before braving Lane's lunch and generous Burgundy at the Reform

Club. But when I sank replete into a soft arm-chair in the smoking-room, and listened drowsily to his proposals, I discovered to my dismay that I could not read my faint pencil summary. One figure, a 7, alone was legible. Sticking firmly to that, as a drowning man to a raft, I evaded all arguments, blandishments, protests, and staggered through somehow to what proved a most satisfactory contract.

The Vale Shakespeare, by the way, led to the single disagreement I had with my chiefs. Its issue involved so much extra work that I asked for an additional office-boy. Ricketts, usually generous almost to a fault, on this occasion, as on one other connected with payments to an editor, proved inexplicably blind. On the previous occasion I had succeeded in convincing him; now I failed. He could see no necessity for another 10s. a week. Morelli, my assistant, was a capable fellow: we could easily do the extra work between us. The refusal of this trifling convenience made me lose my temper so completely that I gave him notice to leave. The conference which followed showed that he and Hacon had never realized, when taking the cheques which I sent them, how considerable their financial success had been, and that recently, by making two alterations in their programme, I had brought them an additional profit of £2000. When they knew the position, they promptly granted my request, and in addition increased my salary to £200. Their venture had indeed proved profitable. When the accounts at the end of seven years were finally audited, it was found that the original capital had been returned to them more than eight times over, and that the goodwill of the business might fairly be valued at some £3500 in addition. This further profit they decided to forgo. Having fulfilled their purpose, the type and matrices should be destroyed, and the Vale Press books remain unique.

Unique the books still appear to me in some respects. It is a mistake to regard them as imitations of the Kelmscott Press. The resemblances are few and, with the exception of the slightly archaic heaviness of the Vale fount, quite

unimportant. Ricketts himself has defined their nature and purpose in his own writings, but when attention returns once more to the revival of Printing at the end of the nineteenth century, men will discover that in one respect he stands alone,—namely as a designer of woodcut borders. These decorations to his books based upon the wild bryony, the hop, the honeysuckle, the rose, the violet and the vine (especially on the larger scale of his ‘Sir Thomas Browne’), have a sparkling colour and a natural grace no less personal to Ricketts than the classical dignity of the designs which introduce the Comedies and Tragedies of Shakespeare, or the plays of the two charming ladies who gained a well-merited poetic recognition as ‘Michael Field,’ and lost it when the critics learned their sex and plurality. The ‘Avon’ fount of the Shakespeare, too, is one of the most handsome and readable of modern types; it is a pity that it could not be excepted from the general destruction. Only in the coloured papers for his bindings must Ricketts admit an equal, a superior perhaps, in Lucien Pissarro, whose Eragny Press books have a freshness and daintiness of dress which render them a joy to the eye.

Ricketts would like to have completed the list of his favourite books with an edition of Swinburne’s ‘Poems and Ballads.’ But his application to the poet was refused. ‘I am sorry to say that I should not wish and could not allow—supposing my publishers to make no objection—any of the three volumes of my “Poems and Ballads” to be separately reissued in this form.’

Besides attending to the accounts, to the printers, and to the booksellers, I read all the proofs, and edited several texts. Over the Shakespeare proofs I got into hot water once or twice with the patient editor Sturge Moore; over a little volume of Shelley’s Lyrics I did still worse, letting one or two ludicrous misprints go through from over-confident familiarity. On the other hand, I believe my text of Apuleius, ‘De Cupidinis et Psyches Amoribus’ to be accurate, and to contain one masterly emendation of the



current reading. Here the man's African Latinity compelled attention to every letter. Yet the book did not go to press without one alarm. Hacon, who received the proofs in Scotland, wired to me to stop its issue. It appeared that he had by him only some modernized French edition, and until I was able to convince him that I had the better authority he thought my text quite insane.

During the season, I hunted through the sale-rooms every week; bidding, as occasion required, either for Ricketts and Shannon or for myself. To work under their critical eyes was in itself an education, and I was promoted to a considerable degree of independence after a certain sale at Sotheby's, where I deliberately passed the Chinese painting I was commissioned to buy for them in favour of another which happily proved a success. A salary of £100 a year does not admit of extensive collecting, so that if an acquaintance happened to want anything I had picked up, I was not above passing it on at a modest profit. For my friend T. B. Lewis of Blackburn I made several purchases; for myself I retained a few small specimens of Wilson, Constable and other painters whom I wished to study.

As a test of human nature the sport of collecting is notorious. One of our older rivals, well-to-do, learned, and so refined that in Hacon's phrase 'his father should have been a pork-butcher,' was famed for his meanness in small matters. One day he pressed me for my opinion upon a vivid little Constable sketch which I wanted to get and to study. As he had already abused my confidence once, I asked if he really wanted it for his own collection. He assured me that he did: whereupon I told him how highly I thought of it, and stood aside in his favour. Three days later it was shown to me at Carfax. Our friend, having bought it at the sale for three and a half guineas, had taken it straight round to Carfax and sold it to them for fifteen guineas *on the strength of my guarantee*. Anger made me revert to schoolboy methods. I told the culprit plainly that if he ever did anything of the kind again I should kick him,

and kick him very hard. To his credit, let it be said, he was not only cured, but bore me no grudge.

Ricketts, though no less eager to acquire fine things, behaved differently. Once, at Christie's, I was so struck by the beauty of a view of *Aquae Albulae*, attributed to Wilson, that I left a commission for it to the limit of my funds, some £25. An hour later Ricketts appeared at Warwick Street, to say that he and Shannon had admired the picture, but finding by inquiry at Christie's that I had put so generous a price upon it, they had decided not to bid against me. Eventually I got the picture, and had just carried it back to Warwick Street when I walked Roger Fry. 'Confound you,' said he, when he saw it, 'I left a bid for that, but never thought it would fetch so much.' And now Colonel Grant, and most other people too, have decided that the object of this three-cornered competition is not by Wilson at all, but by J. R. Cozens.

Though we acquired much practical knowledge we made no sensational finds. The sale-rooms were too carefully watched. Once at Foster's, in a portfolio of worthless modern prints, I came across a superb signed drawing by Hans Baldung, jammed between an engraving and its mount. I replaced it in its humble *cache*, and was commissioned by Ricketts to go up to £30 for the lot. The bidding started at 2s. 6d., and rose slowly to 15s. Then came a pause, but, before I could bid a further shilling, the contest recommenced. When the lot had risen to four pounds, the dealers round the table started sifting the rubbish, print by print. As the Baldung slipped from its hiding-place there was a roar of laughter, and the main combatants soon were revealed as old Sir Charles Robinson, flicking a catalogue from a far corner, and my friend Mayer of Colnaghi's, nodding almost imperceptibly, just behind my back. The drawing fetched between £50 and £60. These two famous collectors must each have seen it, and must each have replaced it in obscurity, hoping, just as I did, that it would remain obscure.

The man who failed to develop in such an environment

would be a dullard indeed. To myself, fettered by false notions about social respectability, and blinkered by a conventional public-school education, those seven years at the Vale Press were years of uninterrupted spiritual and visual deliverance. Ricketts, though he laughed at my obvious limitations (he himself was of the Henri III period; Shannon was a Venetian of the Giorgione-Titian time; I was but a seventeenth-century Dutchman), always encouraged me by prophesying worldly success. In quite early days at The Vale I remember him saying, 'My dear boy, don't you worry! Some day it will be Sir Charles Shannon and Sir Charles Holmes: but it will always be Charles Ricketts.' And in 1902, when criticizing some article of mine, he writes, 'Millais is rather too roughly handled for the Tait Gallery or N.G., and knighthoods, baronetcies and art peerages, remember the word "perhaps," the fiction "to some," the useful roar of the sucking dove usually heard in this land.' Such consolatory chaff I was, no doubt, the more ready to swallow, since my former family and commercial idols had proved to be rather like the image in Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

In the matter of reading, my horizon had been widened immensely by introduction to the literature of modern France; in practical aesthetics the influence of Ricketts was more potent still. Before I knew him my judgments had been rough and ready, as well as strongly biassed by commonplace handbooks. His refinement of eye and taste, his complete independence, did much to correct my native crudities, compelling much closer attention to small things, a weighing of spiritual and technical qualities in a nicer balance than any I had previously used. Gustave Moreau, I think, was the only artist for whom I could not share his admiration; though there were several, principally English, for whom I could not share his dislike.

Since their private ambitions involved an intensive study of the technique of oil-painting, Ricketts and Shannon naturally employed this technical knowledge when criticizing

pictures, and infected me with the same interest. By talking over with them the condition, pigments and handling of works seen in galleries and sale-rooms, I gained in the course of a few years a foundation of practical experience which was afterwards to prove most helpful. Though there were dreadful gaps in my mental equipment, notably as a linguist, I was found to possess an instinctive visual memory for the substance and handling of any picture which I had looked at with attention, so that comparison with other pictures was made easy, and discussion, even with well-equipped authorities, could be more or less confident. Unluckily this facility did not extend to recalling the composition of a painting. There any intelligent amateur still has me at a disadvantage.

I cannot illustrate Ricketts's personality at this time better than by quoting a few extracts from postcards describing his first impressions of Italy, which I had just previously visited with my friend Cripps.

VENICE, April 30, 1899.

I loathed Milan, all the vulgarity of a modern town and none of the seriousness. The Duomo rivals the Albert Memorial, and looks like an American organ in sugar. I hated P. Veronese, and loathed Tintoretto's livid bosh: so far I think T. the most beastly artist in the world.

We arrived at Venice in a charming silver evening and were enchanted and surprised, even Canaletto is too spotty. The Doge's Palace looked like bleached coral, and S. Mark's like bleached roman glass. So far we have only seen the Doge's Palace and I have never seen anything so ghastly in the way of decorative paintings. The Battle of Lepanto by P. V. with the woman in silver satin is good, but his big ceiling and Tintoretto simply appalled me. I shall live in the Gondolas if Venetian painting is like that. I hope Ballantyne and W.S. (Warwick Street) have both burnt down and that we may foreclose on insurances.

VENICE, May 5th, 1899.

Our loathing for Tintoret is subsiding (C. H. S. says NO). I think we have got hardened. In the Accademia the S. Mark is good ordinary colour, his other pictures frightful. I dislike Veronese but on a different plane. Bellini though stands any light and condition; his masterpiece at the Frari should be

hung in Paradise. I think you were tired in Venice, and when the weather darkens even I wish to get back home. I fear that you have no heart; you were unkind to Carpaccio—he fascinates us, though a coarse painter, very unequal, and fearfully patched, damaged and repainted. The dear little dark church of S. Georgio where he is only dirty has become a sort of home for us. The gondolas drive me mad. Don't tell anyone but I have discovered a very important portrait by Lotto in the Accademia, where it is skyed and given to Cariani. I was absolutely staggered on seeing the Raphael sketch-book to find that barring some washes added later each and every drawing was by *Raphael* and not by Perugino Pinturicchio Raphael etc. The hands, the feet, the ears, the face traits are all, like the quality of the pen-stroke, identical in each.<sup>1</sup>—Yours, C. S. R.

If you don't write to me I shall bring you a set of Tintoret.

VENICE, May 15, 1899.

My dear boy, I shall bring you back a collection of Veronese, if the Crucifixion of the Accademia is a picture you like. I imagine you mean the S. Rocco picture. I can't believe that you who wash and often speak the truth could possibly like the Accademia picture. It looks like guts. I had rather come round to Tinto in a cowardly sort of way, having given up the smallest affectation of cleanliness. . . . We have quite fallen in love with a dear old buggins we meet here in the smoking-room every evening; he is the author of Steele's book on Penelope (*i.e.* the book he wanted us to read). He is fanatic of the primitives and hates Tinto. S. says this word is too long. I hope you did not miss the late Bellini at S. Giovanni Crisostomo? S. thinks it almost the best picture in Venice. I am thinking of asking B.<sup>2</sup> to let me write him a book on Carpaccio. I tell you this to prevent Crips from having the job. I am sure he liked Carpaccio better than you did. I hope you have been mixing paints for M. F. and that T. did not get his picture.—Yours respectfully, C. S. R.

MILANO, CHIASSO, May 23, 1899.

We scamped Verona, and funk'd Brescia to escape Civico museums, and are howling for the Louvre and its *well-preserved* pictures. I think Venice should be done in 3 or 4 days, the rest

<sup>1</sup> This was, and is, my own conviction.

<sup>2</sup> The B., presumably, stands for Samuel Butler. M. F., of course, is Michael Field, for whom I was doing some dog-caricatures. T.'s picture I have forgotten.

is vexation. Padua was a revelation, that is Mantegna was as good as he should be, Giotto much better than I imagined, he is one of *the* great impressions I have received in my life. The Chapel of S. Giorgio a revelation also. We had ourselves locked in for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour each day, just as if we were Mr. Ruskin. Verona is worth seeing. Ask Bynion if the little Pisanello Madonna in Civico is known, I consider it one of the most representative pictures I have seen in Italy: my local photograph is marked Zaevio, and as the Morelli crew have done Verona, this may be their funny little way. Padua contains a magnificent Antonello da Messina unmentioned by Baedeker Behrenson. I find my Piero of the Poldi is called Fra Carnevale, a supposed pupil of his, who is known now never to have existed. It is curious how many points in attribution in London have become simplified by the utter collapse of the squirts to whom good pictures are attributed. I agree with you the Bonifazios are—I think the first must have had as many uncles as you, only they *all painted*.'

It is amusing to contrast these judgments with those of a non-painter, my friend Clutton-Brock, who visited Venice four years later. The future art critic of the 'Times' writes:

VENICE, 27 March 1903.

I have seen a lot of pictures and must have a long talk with you when I get back. I suppose I am not quite well balanced enough yet to appreciate pictures properly at present, but my opinions are rather different from what I expected. I can't stand Titian here at all, especially the Assumption, a most common machine, I think ('The Assunta,' says Ricketts, 'knocked us flat with admiration'), always excepting the Deposition, that last picture of his in the Academy, which is one of the two or three greatest pictures I have ever seen (Ricketts does not mention it!). Tintoret much finer than I expected, surely all round the most wonderful of all painters, especially in colour, at his best, Cain and Abel, Miracle of S. Mark, Crucifixion in the Academy. . . . John Bellini a little disappointing, rather timid and narrow, and perhaps a little stupid. Carpaccio hardly a serious painter except in little bits, no idea of making a picture.

My own first impressions are recorded in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER XI

### ROCHE'S

(1896-1903)

New ways of life; financial anxieties; two barrister cousins; writing for the 'Dome'; the company at Roche's; the 'Athenaeum'; cases of *hubris*; Conder at Dieppe; visit to Italy; its effect upon painting; boxing and fishing.

A PROTEST to an Income Tax surveyor reveals receipts for the year 1896-7 amounting to £63, 4s. 10d. The £60 presumably represents my salary from the Vale Press: the balance my earnings from art and literature. On such a sum it was no good trying to live as I had done hitherto. Relinquishing top-hat and tail-coat; relinquishing my panelled rooms in Cowley Street, my attic-studio and my etching-press, I found quarters at the top of a condemned house, standing alone in Millbank Street on the spot now occupied by Rodin's *Burghers of Calais*. The side-walls were propped with vast shores of grimy timber; at the back a steam-crane on the river-bank made the crazy structure quiver from morning to night; an arc-lamp over the crane sizzled and flared just outside my garret window, rendering any other light unnecessary. This garret, two unfurnished rooms below and willing attendance, all for 8s. 6d. a week, suited my pocket no less exactly than my habits.

I soon learned to sleep under the glare of the arc-lamp, in a bed vibrating with the rattle of the crane. When the sun blazed over the wide prospects of the river in the morning, I could shift my cheap easel to the room opposite, and take it back again later. The place was kept clean; my boiled egg or bacon breakfast was admirably served; I was in touch with my friends in Cowley Street, and had done with the need for keeping up appearances. Dinner remained the

formidable problem, Kirk's ham-and-beef-shop in the Hay-market being the nearest thing to a solution. There for 1s. 2d., or sometimes 1s. 4d., the pangs of hunger could be alleviated; the monotony of the wholesome fare being some check upon natural appetite. The Gourmet's restaurant, behind Leicester Square, was more famous; but its dinners *à la carte* had a way of mounting up to 2s. or more, and so could only be enjoyed by those who were richer than I.

The ever-present menace of liability to my cousin and my mother seemed to demand the saving of every penny; yet once, for a few months, that menace was sensibly diminished. At Richmond my mother had shown some kindness to the wife and daughters of a mining prospector in New Zealand. Lighting at last upon a seven-foot lode of auriferous quartz, he sent the news to his wife, who in gratitude passed it on to my mother. We put our little all into the mine; up went the shares in due course, and only the imbecility of an acquaintance in the City (why do we assume every City man to be a financial Solomon?) to whom I entrusted the business, prevented a sale at a handsome profit. Then the lode was lost in some volcanic disturbance of the strata, and could never be rediscovered. My prudent mother just got clear: I myself, after seeing a profit of several hundred pounds, was some £50 to the bad, though I gained an experience which has possibly saved me from worse disaster.

Having cut the last tie connecting me with the ordinary publishing trade, I felt bound to regulate my position with my cousin. I had so long regarded him, with good reason, as an intimate, generous and wholly trustworthy friend, that I could not comprehend the difference between his original promise to me, and the terms of its performance when I wished to enter Nimmo's business. I got him accordingly to come and see me at Warwick Street, asking him plainly across the counter whether I had done anything to displease him. He said 'No,' and seemed surprised at the question. How then, I went on, was I to understand the discrepancy between an advance either without interest or at a nominal



rate, and a proposal equivalent to interest at eight per cent.? He reddened a little, and replied that he saw no particular discrepancy. The answer made me laugh. 'We see things differently,' said I, shook his hand, and was never afraid of him again. 'A comical limb of Mammon' was the comment of the one friend to whom I confided the interview.

But the friend was wrong. My cousin still retained the element of greatness which seven years before had made me his devoted servant and admirer. A few months later he wrote to me to say that he was altering his will; that I had been named as one of his executors, but, since there was now no business to be disposed of, executors were no longer needed. Perhaps £1000 now would be of more service to me than a larger legacy in the future? I had no false pride about accepting a gift which reinstated an old friend, reduced my liabilities to an amount I could contemplate without panic, and so cured me of my 'poor relation' complex that I could thenceforth treat comments upon that topic as they deserved. All the same, as one tramped home sometimes on a wet evening, still hungry, and constantly splashed by the carriages of the prosperous, it was easy to pardon and experience the resentment of a Communist.

Another victim of family pleasantries often shared our scanty dinners. My cousin D. was the unpaid devil of a well-known K.C., but his private means were running out, and, without further backing, he would soon have to give up the bar. Once when he earned eight guineas by writing two chapters of another man's book (I got a sovereign myself for writing the preface), D. confessed that the amount was more than he had earned in two years in the Temple. At this critical stage in his fortunes he had the Barmecidal entertainment of dining with his uncle, and helping him afterwards to settle up his affairs before he started on a tour round the world. The settlement included the posting to various charities of seven cheques of £1000 apiece by the impecunious nephew, who was compelled in due course to abandon the English bar when his last shilling had gone.

D.'s exceptional knowledge of law, however, did me one signal service. In exchanging our personal and family difficulties he learned of my financial trouble, probed it minutely in his lodgings one evening, and at the end of three hours delivered a judgment contrary to that of my legal advisers. This saved me from a heavy additional liability.

In the end, I am glad to say, D. completely disappointed the affectionate expectations of the family. A junior uncle enabled him to go abroad, and thereby finally to obtain a minor judicial post, in a provincial town on another continent. There he duly performed his humble duties, until one of his judgments was challenged and reversed by the High Court of the country. D., never addicted to compromise, threw caution to the winds, protested, and sent in a reasoned defence of his own legal accuracy, quoting the appropriate acts and authorities. Receiving no reply, he concluded that he had cut his own throat, and resigned himself to permanent oblivion. A year or so later he was abruptly summoned to headquarters. A judgeship in an important court had become vacant. He was not only selected for the post, which he has held ever since with distinction, but was actually supported in his candidature by those whom he had criticized, against the Home authorities, who would naturally have liked to appoint a man of their own to such a desirable place.

The academic successes of another barrister cousin, Walter Clay, had so generally been held up for my emulation in youth, that I came to regard his name with loathing. But the moment I met him in person at Trinity, where he was reading for a Fellowship, dislike changed to affection. At the bar his learning, combined with immense energy and good humour, carried him rapidly forward: his strong political instincts (he was an Asquithian Liberal) marked him out early as a coming Parliamentary figure. At his mother's house at Watford I could dispute with his clever Cambridge friends, and meet his uncle Sir John Gorst, most

outspoken and independent of ministers, who did not conceal his satisfaction at escaping Gladstone's funeral by riding out on a push-bike for tea with his sister. Clay's width of interests, covering pictures, architecture, literature, philosophy and mountaineering, coupled with a searching combative humour, made him the very best of company. His desire to test every new theory by practical experience once led to a laughable result. As we were slogging along a very dirty road near Watford, I happened to tell him how I had read of a way of defeating a man who had got your head 'into Chancery.' In a second, without warning (he was over six feet high and broadly built), he had my head down in his iron grip. I tried the book-learned trick; and lo! Clay collapsed abruptly into the mud at my side, remarking, 'Well! That seems quite satisfactory.' A year or two later all the high hopes we had of him came to an end, for he lost his life, with four other climbers, on the Gran Paradiso.

My first efforts at increasing a scanty income were directed at the 'Westminster Gazette.' That enterprising, if politically misguided, journal would accept outside contributions; my friend Cripps once received a guinea, I believe, for quite a short poem.<sup>1</sup> I could not rise to more than paragraphs of current art gossip, which I provided, until the receipt of a postal order for 1s. 10d., 'in payment for one month's contributions,' taught me that I was no journalist. My next experiment had better luck. Our little company at Kirk's was munching its boiled beef one evening, when in came Binyon with great news. A pastry-cook in Soho had started a first-rate *table-d'hôte* dinner for eighteen pence, with a twopenny tip besides for the waiter. The others were for immediate migration. I hesitated. The price was too high for my finances. To prove his case, Binyon offered to stand me a dinner. I still hesitated. Then he said, 'You know something about Hiroshige. Write an article about him for the

<sup>1</sup> Since published, with other poems, in 'The Magic Grape' (London: G. Bell; 1924).

"Dome" and make two guineas. That will last you there for months.' So I came to Roche's and to writing.

The 'Dome,' a new monthly, was edited and mostly written, under various pseudonyms, by that versatile journalist E. J. Oldmeadow, to whom Binyon, from his knowledge of art and letters, was a welcome adjutant. As I had never before composed an article, that essay on Hiroshige was solemnly written and rewritten five times over before I ventured to send in the MS. Then a miraculous chance intervened. I had signed the article 'Charles Holmes,' and the name was mistaken by an influential reviewer for that of Mr. Charles Holme, well known as a prominent member of the Japan Society, and as editor-proprietor of the 'Studio.' In consequence, when the little article appeared in the third number of the 'Dome' on Michaelmas Day 1897, it received a column of praise in the 'Sphere,' and derivative notices elsewhere, which encouraged Oldmeadow to give me further employment. I could thenceforth join without apprehension the little company which gathered at Roche's.

Roche was a charming fellow and a first-class *chef*, his *gâteaux mocha* his masterpieces, his smiling wife an adroit manager. They thoroughly understood the art of making their clients comfortable. 'I have a little sea-trout to-night,' Roche would whisper. 'It is not on the menu.' The eighteen-penny dinner of hors-d'œuvres, soup, fish or eggs, entrée or joint, sweet or cheese might be thus sensibly enriched for the habitual guest, and, alone among restaurants of its kind, each table was furnished with jugs of water, so that no one, unless he chose, need go to the expense of sending out for beer, or for Lorient's wines. The visible part of the establishment in Old Compton Street consisted in those days of a pastry-cook's window, a pay-desk, three small tables, a round table and a long table. The small tables were for couples and family parties; the round table was left to those who, like Max Beerbohm, might wish to be apart with friends; the long table was the *rendezvous* for the rest of us, so much so that the presence of any stranger, particularly near the

head of it, was felt to be an intrusion. Indeed the table quickly came to be an informal club, to which admission could be gained only by personal introduction, or by discreet waiting 'on approval' below the salt.

The genial R. A. Streatfeild of the British Museum, musical critic of the 'Daily Graphic,' was quickly marked out as the social centre and arbiter of our little company. Binyon was its most definite man of letters, though Richard Steele, the Baconian, Oswald Barron, wit and antiquary, Edgar Jepson the novelist, Mr. and Mrs. Voynich, and at least half the other members, had literary work or connexions. I particularly recall one evening when Binyon brought in a tall, bronzed young man in blue serge, with a grave quiet manner, whom he introduced to us as John Masefield the sailor-poet. Another notable figure was W. B. Thomas, the handsome editor of the 'Vegetarian' but no bigot in his own dietary, whom I recognized, on his appearance, as having bowled me first ball on the Christ Church ground at Oxford. He had a nasty trick of fighting a slowish ball which would, I am sure, have won him distinction as a cricketer, if his athletic prowess in other fields had allowed him the time. Laurence Weaver, then a bright-eyed young Irvingite agent for patent window-frames; Arthur Cochrane, the Herald, then a wine-merchant and playwright; Randall Davies, master of the Limerick and secretary to the millionaire Pulitzer; J. D. Hoare, musical critic of the 'Globe'; tall and courtly 'Count' Morgan; merry Cloudesley Brereton; Dr. Fowler the zoologist; 'The Turtle-man,' scholar and cricketer; 'The Cobra-man,' master of jiu-jitsu; Jalland, the portly manager to Marie Tempest; Arthur Lowry and George Calderon, with Cripps, Vaux, Dobson and other personal friends, were also more or less constant diners. Gay Cecil Brewer and quiet Dunbar Smith introduced us to the real truth about architectural 'competitions'; Sydney Greenslade aired his passion for Martin-ware. Wyndham Lewis, with his romantic face, his crumpled, gloomy sonnets and fine Slade-School drawings, gave a touch of youthful

force and purpose to a general scheme of light-hearted middle-age. Miss May Morris, Ernest Thesiger, the Strangs, and the Holroyds came fairly often; other artists less frequently. Constance Collier was a familiar spectacle, though not of our company: Esterhazy, of Dreyfus fame, and Whistler made experimental visits.

That table at Roche's was an ideal place over which to swop experiences, and pick up any little job that might be vacant, or be invented by Binyon, who had always a wonderful eye for the needs of a friend. The prey, or the parasites, of impecunious editors and minor publishers, we were no doubt a commonplace lot compared with the more rakish and conspicuous personages who frequented 'The Crown' and 'The Café Royal.' We could not afford such dissipation, being thankful if we could supplement, by occasional work at night, the small salaries we earned by day in offices or museums.

Streatfeild and Hoare, in the course of their musical duties, were able to take me with them to hear Tchaikovsky and other novelties of the time; sometimes even to the Opera, though the gallery there was my more common experience. Thus my education progressed in more ways than one, but that which I received from Shannon and Ricketts remained predominant. They impressed upon me far more than the details of critical theory and practice, compelling me to think about larger questions,—the ideal management of Museums and Picture-Galleries; the future of the art-treasures still remaining in English private collections, and the best means of protecting them against the enterprise of Germany and against American wealth. In their foresight upon these matters they were some five years or more ahead of their time. Hence, when I had to tackle the problem later, its factors were familiar; its proper solution more difficult than doubtful.

During these last years of the century, Society, which had previously been exclusive and stately, threw off the restraints of Victorianism, took the millionaire to its bosom, and grew

more and more extravagant. The results quickly became apparent. The plutocrat might oblige with an occasional stock-exchange tip, but in return he set a standard of living which most of his new associates could not afford, and were too proud or too silly to reject. So one after another the owners of great estates and private collections found themselves embarrassed, even before Sir William Harcourt's Death Duties had brought them face to face with ruin. The resulting drain of works of art from England at first attracted little notice: to the authorities of the National Gallery it appeared to be quite unknown. Horne's attacks on the Gallery were chiefly devoted to criticism of the Director, Sir Edward Poynter, and his purchases. George Moore in the 'Speaker' and D. S. MacColl in the 'Spectator,' the most vigorous figures in contemporary art-journalism, were engaged in championing the Impressionists and young painters like Steer against a Royal Academy suffering from cerebral sclerosis. Claude Phillips alone, in the 'Daily Telegraph,' seemed aware of the national danger, but, having social connexions which he valued, was too cautious to say in print all that he thought in private.

Meanwhile I carried my study of Japanese art to the point of trying to learn the language, and in 1899 published in 'The Artists' Library' (Unicorn Press) a little book on Hokusai. A move to get me a place in the Oriental Department at South Kensington followed, but came to nothing. Our family friend, John Gorst, was too honest. The 'Hokusai,' having met with a success second only to that of Roger Fry's 'Bellini,' was followed by a companion volume on Constable. To this I devoted an amount of work disproportionate to its length, visiting Constable's haunts, and making voluminous notes which soon were turned to account. The indefatigable Binyon, being asked by Constable and Co. to write a much larger book on the artist, with his habitual generosity passed on the chance to me. Thus, soon after my small book had appeared in 1901,

I was engaged upon another which occupied me for nearly two years.

For some time, too, I had been making essays in journalism, as art critic for the 'Realm' and other weeklies of brief existence and uncertain finance. At the end of the century I was offered permanent work on the 'Athenaeum' as the junior colleague of Roger Fry. 'The kind of thing that nobody outside a lunatic asylum could read. Golly! What a paper!' wailed Mr. John Finsbury. Yet in the 'nineties the 'Athenaeum' with its gravity, its anonymity and its unquestionable scholarship, was a real power. All publishers, and on their advertisements the paper chiefly depended, recognized that a favourable review in the 'Athenaeum' meant success for any new book. F. G. Stephens, the Pre-Raphaelite, had been its art critic, but his duties had recently been transferred to Fry, already conspicuous as the champion of traditional methods and ideals, as opposed to new importations from France.

Fry confined himself almost entirely to the field of his own interests, the Old Masters of the Continental Schools. British Painting in general, and the Moderns (whom Fry disliked) fell to my share, so that I seldom lacked material. Moreover, Fry's fine sense of style set an exacting standard. All being strictly anonymous, it was essential that there should be no glaring discrepancies in presentation, and I was flattered when Miss Fry confessed that she had mistaken one of my articles for her brother's writing. Vernon Rendall made a charming editor, trusting us completely; Sir Charles Dilke, the proprietor, entertained the staff occasionally at dinners in Sloane Street, dinners no less solemn than elegant. Altogether these occupations, and the two or three pounds a week by which they increased my income, gradually swept away the self-obsession and fears of failure which had haunted me since 1890. By the end of the century one could snap one's fingers at family disapproval.

In narrow lodgings in Barton Street, Westminster, and more freely in Markham Square, Chelsea, I messed away at



oil-painting for several years with no apparent success. Perhaps the sombre tones of Van Goyen and Ruysdael, of Wilson and J. R. Cozens, reflected my outlook upon life. Anyhow, I became a dull and rather gloomy little painter, relying unwisely upon raw umber as a general medium for fusing more positive colours, in ignorance of that attractive pigment's habit of eating up anything else that may be painted into it, especially when both have been freely tempered with linseed oil. The few relics of that period, in consequence, are now dark canvases, almost uniformly brown, with hardly a trace of the brighter colours by which they had once been animated. All this futile labour may have taught me something about composition and execution: it did me no other service.

My holiday memories are more cheerful. Roche's, for example, played a cricket-match against Pinner, which provided a comic illustration of the doctrine of *hubris*. In the brake from the station, our champion cricketer (M.C.C. and all that) began, as unaccountably as unmercifully, to chaff the most awkward of our recruits on the pretty figure he would soon be cutting. Cripps and I, having reverence for the gods, recognized that the scoffer was 'fey.' Pinner started by making runs off the solemn slows of George Calderon (clad in a wondrous gray undervest instead of a shirt), until W. B. Thomas and Streatfeild came on to bowl them out. Roche's team fared more disastrously; Streatfeild alone reaching double figures. The M.C.C. crack was bowled for duck (fast balls on a village pitch are no respecters of greatness), but continued his chaff until the pallid victim, equipped with various borrowed properties, had stumped out to bat. He proved no unsuspected W. G. but, though he generally failed to touch the ball, the ball invariably failed to touch his wicket. Three catches in succession did he spoon up: all three were missed. Then the gods sent him a half-volley which he smote till it came banging against the pavilion. That was too much for the scoffer; he faded away into the background. Streatfeild's score had been equalled

and the match almost won, when madness seemed to descend upon the recruit himself. He rushed out for a supreme slog, and was duly bowled by a shooter. The gods had sufficiently vindicated their objection to human pride.

This trivial incident was recalled two years later by certain preliminaries to the Boer War. Misgiving started with the casual talk of a Guardsman in a country house :—‘he had no intention of roughing it, and was taking out a comfortable bed. The whole thing would be over in five or six weeks.’ His ostentatious confidence filled me with forebodings, which were soon made infinitely more acute by the vainglorious idiocy of the popular Press. It was sickening to see a campaign in which victory could bring us no credit, against a people whose fighting record we had reason to respect, being treated with such insane presumption. The news of disaster which came in week after week at once confirmed my fears and relieved them a little, owing to its prompt effect upon the national temper. By admitting our mistakes, by accepting our humiliations, we gradually seemed to avert the anger of the gods and were saved from a second Syracuse. Nowadays I feel that it would be rather unkind of Providence to punish a whole nation for the sham patriotism of its Press, and the boasts of a few talkers; unless taking such follies too seriously be the one unpardonable sin.

The Diamond Jubilee of 1897 was spent with Cripps in Dorset, a bonfire on Melbury Beacon being the climax of the local dissipations. Remaining by it, after the other revellers had left and the flames were dying down, we became aware that the heart of the blaze had been a great can of oil, still glowing almost white-hot among the piled embers. A frenzy came upon us. Seizing the largest available brands, we braved the fire, turned the can over, gradually pushed or levered it into the open, and thence to the edge of the beacon hill. Once started on its downward career the glowing cylinder progressed with a series of most satisfactory leaps and bounds into the darkness below, and we felt we had finished our Jubilee well. I woke next day with some

qualms, but inquiry proved that the only victim seemed to have been a rustic, who was sleeping it off under a gorse bush, and was frightened almost out of his wits when the fiery mass came hurtling by.

In the following spring I went to stay with the Hacons at Dieppe. The day started with a *douche*, and it fell to my lot to get Conder, my fellow-guest, out of bed for the ceremony. A corner of his room was piled nearly three feet high with empty soda-water bottles. As he stood stripped, and the cold jet kneaded the muscles of his back, he made a magnificent figure, very like a graceful edition of the Choiseul-Gouffier 'Apollo.' So well-built indeed was he that, when we went out together in the morning and he suggested that we should box at the Casino, I was just a little nervous that he might prove too strong for me. At the Casino we drew blank; but when I casually mentioned our visit to Hacon, he was horrified, saying 'Thank God! Don't you realize that if you had really hit him once you would probably have killed him? He has no inside left.'

Conder's dreamy charm rendered him a fascinating companion. Our rambles from one café to another brought us finally to a tiny curiosity shop, where Conder stood by the window, absorbed in contemplating a scrap of old silver brocade. 'When I have learned the colour of that, I shall turn it into a fan' was the explanation. Further talk led him to ask to see my sketch-book. 'You draw with your head,' was his comment, 'you would do better if you could learn to trust to your hand.' I tried the experiment quickly, but did not continue it, since the results appeared to lose in substance as much as they gained (and the gain was undeniable) in artistic effect.

Proceeding to call on the Thaulow family, recently immortalized by Jacques Blanche, and imbibing further liqueurs in the garden, I was introduced to a silent blond-bearded giant, bigger even than the genial Thaulow—Christian Krogh, the Norwegian painter, a personage of some standing in his own country, who, the legend went, had

killed a man, and so had come abroad for his health. They all came to dinner with the Hacons in the evening. Conder was late and, on entering the room, discovered that the mass of violets in the middle of the table reminded him of a grave. Seizing them with both hands he scattered them between us in little swathes and bunches, as effective as one of his own decorative panels, and then entertained us all for the rest of the evening in his unique Dionysiac fashion, the most trivial of sayings and doings being redeemed by an inimitable grace, as if some inspired Pagan divinity were struggling to break through the frail mortal envelope.

The interval before I returned on the following day was devoted to golf. Hacon and I, after an early lunch, were to play the Vice-Consul and some soldier friend. Hacon and the Vice-Consul lunched so well that the match started as a comic single, between the soldier and myself. Just as I began to tire, about half-way round, Hacon recovered his eye and pulled us through triumphantly, cooling my self-satisfaction by pointing out the 'Sussex' tossing on her way to the harbour, and predicting the worst of crossings for me. All the party came to see me off, including a pale and draggled Ernest Dowson, upon whom the Vice-Consul had to turn a blind eye. I did not take the prescription (Conder's) which Hacon recommended, 'Get drunk and keep drunk,' though the sea and wind became more and more violent; yet by taking brandy and water after each paroxysm, I found myself at the end of an hour to be one of the very few on board who could walk about unconcerned in the welter.

In the autumn I had more golf with the Hacons at Dornoch, and found in the russet and emerald of the Scottish mountains a splendour I had never seen upon English hills. But all these pleasant memories were soon eclipsed by a journey to Italy in the spring of 1899. Having neither too much time nor much money, Cripps and I again prepared for it with transatlantic method, reading Dante, D'Annunzio and a Conversation-book, and working out a chart of each day's programme with a Continental Bradshaw, the plans

in Baedeker, and advice from Ricketts, who had not as yet visited Italy, as to the things we had to see.

Switzerland proved to be clad in chilly clouds, under which the snow-clad rocks of Pilatus, the peak of the Mythen, and the huge mass of the Bristenstock loomed impressive as we passed them. But when, from the stuffy confinement of the St. Gothard tunnel, the train suddenly burst into the glittering snows and afternoon splendour of the Ticino Valley, our highest hopes were fulfilled. Gliding down past Biasca and Bellinzona we felt that we were indeed in Turner's Italy, and when we had trudged ankle-deep in dust to our hotel in Milan not even the disgusting sweetness of Asti Spumante could spoil that gorgeous recollection. At Parma we landed on a Good Friday, to find the Gallery closed. As we stood in despair before the door, a small Italian boy, noticing our disappointment, offered to run and fetch the keeper for us. We could not hope much from his good offices, but there was nothing else to do but accept them, since we had already seen the churches. To our surprise the boy returned very shortly, bringing the keeper with him. The Gallery was specially opened for us, and our delight in Correggio's 'Giorno' (was there ever a more wonderful piece of painting than S. Catherine's head and left arm?) was equalled only by our gratitude for the Italian good-nature which had come so opportunely to our rescue. It was the first of many small kindnesses with which we met: the English had not then been superseded in popular favour by the Germans.

Bologna with its arcades, its leaning towers, its other architectural surprises, its excellent sculptures and soup, seemed an ideal Italian city. Florence involved days of real hard work. Herbert Horne very kindly took us in hand, introducing us to buried, battered frescoes, the only music-hall, and to the white-washed fiaschetteria Barile, with its great swinging flasks of first-rate Chianti, and its excellent cooking, at prices worthy of Roche himself. No wonder things were cheap! The wages of a Florentine postman at

this time were seven lire a week. Among the works of art, the varied magnificence of Fra Angelico, Botticelli and Verrocchio was the chief surprise; Ghirlandajo, who had seemed so effective in photography, the chief disappointment. Michelangelo, of course, stood alone. When we compared notes at the end of a week with my aunt, Miss Holmes, and the Papillons, who were living on the Lungarno, we found that on the whole we had seen more of Florence than its regular winter inhabitants.

A short visit to Siena left one abiding impression. On the white walls of the little Gallery there, paintings in tempera lost their accustomed pallor and showed up with unexpected richness. Nearly thirty years later I had an opportunity of utilizing this impression, when preparing the first room in the National Gallery to receive our Primitives. Brassy skies made the buildings of Venice look more like T. B. Hardy than Canaletto or Turner, but the *Vino di Verona* was excellent, and inspired us to queer mutual confidences. Titian, always excepting the big *Pietà*, proved an absolute disappointment; Tintoretto disconcertingly unequal, with tempting flashes of light and colour, Veronese mostly rather stodgy, Carpaccio amusing, Bellini always beautiful and, at S. Giovanni Crisostomo, supreme. Tiepolo too was a most refreshing novelty among so much that was either over-ripe or over-cleaned. I mention these impressions, because I have recorded already those felt about the same time by Ricketts and by Clutton-Brock.

In our Verona hotel we found Thaulow. He was painting the famous bridge, and impressed us after dinner by a discourse on the virtue of simple, absolute sincerity in art. Returning at midday across the aforesaid bridge, we saw him on the shingle below, his painting materials still unpacked, while he wrestled with a huge camera. I had always been puzzled by the accuracy with which he represented reflections in water. The reason was now made plain; plainer than his idea of sincerity. When we reached the church of SS. Nazaro e Celso, the chapel containing

the noble paintings by Montagna was filled with a funeral *cortège*. To our dismay, the sacristan rushed into the crowd of mourners, sweeping them this way and that to make a passage for us to the panels, which were lying on the ground by the altar. After this disgrace, we were only half-shocked at Brescia, where a chair was brought so that we might climb up on to the altar itself, regardless of the worshippers, and examine Titian's *Resurrection*.

The high city of Bergamo was invisible under torrents of rain, but a tiny restaurant close to the Gallery, filled with friendly shepherds in great blue cloaks, provided cutlets and such Verona wine that my usual faculty of memorizing pictures was completely ruined for the day. Almost all that I remember in those interesting galleries is a little white-haired Englishman, who engaged me in a critical discussion. This was rapidly degenerating into a dispute when he was carried off to safety by a large majestic lady. Later, the time came for us to sign our names in the visitors' book, and the previous entry read 'Alfred Austin.'

If I have spoken of this little tour in too much detail, I must be forgiven; yet the effects, as I look back upon it, were considerable. In the first place it enabled me to collate and to modify what I had been learning from photographs and written criticism (Morelli was now giving place to Berenson), and by giving me a solid technical foundation for studying the Giorgione-Titian period, with which artistic taste was then largely concerned. But the chief service, not at once apparent, that the sight of Italy rendered, was to release me gradually from preoccupation with the ideas of chiaroscuro which had kept me a murky painter. The recollection of that first long afternoon in the sunlit Ticino Valley was, I think, more potent than the effect of any picture or group of pictures; remaining at the back of the mind as a vision of transcendent light and colour, which might, with luck, some day be realized upon canvas.

The period of transition naturally produced some queer products. I still possess a little painting of *A Barn near*

*Cobham*, which Carfax attempted to sell for me. It caught Sir Edward Poynter's eye, as he browsed round their establishment with Robbie Ross. 'Who is that by?' he asked. 'Oh! that's by Holmes,' was the answer. 'Holmes? Holmes?' said the Director of the National Gallery. 'When did *he* die?' Liberation first came in 1900, after Cripps and I had walked in the brightest of early spring sunshine down the Itchen Valley to Winchester. That glittering waterside was all new to me; new also was Winchester itself. Under Cripps's expert guidance I saw all the details of College, long familiar to me in legend, while St. Catherine's Hill with the river below it made a natural composition which I proceeded to carry out in paint on my return. The picture proved so much more vivid and lively than my previous efforts that Shannon procured, through the kindly Van Wisselingh, an invitation for me to submit it to the New English Art Club. Ricketts summarily dismissed my very modest notions about price. 'Don't make yourself cheap, or others will take you at your own valuation. You can always knock something off a price, but you can never put anything on.'

The New English Art Club, at this time the single refuge for artists out of sympathy with the Royal Academy, held two exhibitions every year at the Dudley Gallery in Piccadilly, just opposite, as was fitting, the gateway to Burlington House. The Gallery was small, having accommodation for not more than 150 paintings and drawings; the Jury, consisting of the most notable 'outsiders' of the time, was thus, of necessity, severely critical. With the *Autumn Afternoon near Winchester*, I submitted a little brown picture of a barn. Both were accepted, not, as Fry afterwards told me, without a fight on his part against Charles Furse and others of the then modernists. To crown all, the Winchester picture was bought by Lady Harmsworth for sixty guineas. When the news was broken to my family it was received with frank incredulity. 'What! Sixty guineas! You must mean sixteen. Why! His uncle never got *that* for a picture in his life.'



The feature of this exhibition was Orpen's little picture of *The Mirror*, which in a moment raised a Slade student from obscurity to a repute which his next exhibits confirmed and made permanent. My little success was not repeated. The *Martello Tower*, sent in May 1901, might have become a fine picture in the hands of Claude Monet; in mine it was bright, laboured and stuffy. In November of the same year my *Constable wanderings* bore fruit in two pictures. *Stoke Church, Suffolk*, more or less vaguely in the Gainsborough style, was admired by Ricketts. I thought it too brown, and afterwards, for a show at Wolverhampton, repainted the background so that it became nothing at all.

In the summer, however, I had seen at Van Wisselingh's the *Don Quixote* by Daumier, now in the Berlin Gallery, and had been so deeply impressed that I attempted, in a painting of *Old Sarum*, what I imagined to be a somewhat similar simplification. The lessons of Strang, and collecting Japanese prints, ought to have guided me in that direction sooner, but not until I had seen that masterly specimen of Daumier was I impelled to a practical experiment. The picture has now grown hopelessly dark, but it was liked by Sturge Moore and other friends, although it was not calculated to make any show in an exhibition which contained Steer's *Rainbow* and charming examples of Conder, Rothenstein and others.

May 1902 was notable for the first appearance of Augustus John, already a complete master. I had met him just previously at Rothenstein's, and it was from Rothenstein in May 1903 that I received a singularly kind and charming letter when my *magnum opus* of the moment was rejected, one of the very few rejections from which I have ever suffered. As I was shortly to be married the set-back was annoying; but it was thoroughly deserved. I had tackled another Claude Monet subject, poplars by a river against a bright sky, repainted it rashly at the last moment (as I'm prone to do) and ruined it. The moment that it got back to Markham Square the painting was destroyed, beyond reparation even by my landlady, who, with a touching if misguided

faith in my future, was wont to sew together privily the fragments of pictures which I had cut up. She kept them, so I'm told, for years.

The rooms which I shared with Cripps in Markham Square gave ample room not only for painting, and for writing my big book on Constable, but for boxing, which, with occasional Sunday tramps in the Home Counties, continued to be my chief exercise. When I was left desolate by Cripps's marriage, his place was taken by my cousin Norman Dickson. A hard-working, misogynist house-surgeon at St. Thomas's Hospital, his good looks earned him the nickname of Adonis at Roche's, and camouflaged a physique which made him a trustworthy three-quarter back and a really formidable pugilist. When his blue eyes got well alight after a knock or two, the pace and violence of his hitting called for every defensive device, and for counter-offensives such as I was never compelled to use with others. Mayer, afterwards of Colnaghi's, a plucky and active light-weight pupil of Sam Blacklock, with W. G. Dobson, of the Harlequins, a massive and determined heavy-weight, made more comfortable sparring-partners. Dobson happened to drop in one evening just after Norman Dickson had settled there. The two discovered that they had been contemporaries at Cheltenham, and regaled me, over whisky, with Cheltenham 'shop' into the small hours. When at last they rose to go each, most ceremoniously, begged the other to go first. Finally the Harlequin, whose bulk had carried him through many a rough-and-tumble, said cheerily, 'Well! If you won't go out first I must put you out,' and proceeded to do so. I was afraid the good-humoured tussle which followed would bring down the jerry-built house; but my private forecast was not at fault. It was the Harlequin who was heaved down the steps.

Dobson shortly afterwards asked me down to Teignmouth to meet his people, and in particular a younger brother Denis, already a Blue and an International forward, who would put me in my place. But when I saw that superb

specimen of humanity playing about easily with 40-lb. dumb-bells, I felt like the Queen of Sheba after meeting Solomon, and flatly declined to put on the gloves with him. The odds were too overwhelming; the risk of a bad accident too great.

That very afternoon I had reason to bless my cowardice. Newton Abbot were to play the Civil Service, and Denis had become such a local hero that 'Dorbson!' 'Dorbson!' was the crowd's only battle-cry. He justified their applause by his amazing activities, and by one outstanding feat. A big Civil Service three-quarter got away with the ball. Denis made a jump and a grab which, missing the man's neck, slithered down his back till the fingers happened to catch a little upturned fold of the jersey. But the hold was enough for Denis. With a casual flick of his arm he lifted that six-footer clean off the ground to turn a lumbering somersault in the air, while the 'Dorbson' yells became frantic. As I walked away after the match, a shrimp between the two burly brothers, down the lanc which the crowd reverently made for them, a small boy, darting out an arm and a finger towards Denis Dobson's ulster, turned to his fellow-urchins with the triumphant cry, 'Aie touched 'un.'

During these years I was enabled by the kindness of Dr. Butler and the Brasenose authorities to keep in touch with the Windrush, though the river had suffered grievously since my Oxford days. First came a visitor who deserved the fate of his eponymous apostle, for taking *and keeping* no less than twelve brace of those noble fish on one fatal day. Then came pollution from the Witney mills, which turned the river blue-black, killing the fish, their food, and the very water-weeds. Re-stocking mended things but slowly. Little brown quarter-pounders and one pure Lochleven trout of two pounds were my first captures. Then as the river recovered its colour and the weeds began to return, the various new breeds amalgamated, taking the form of a handsome brownish trout. This, in turn, reverted gradually to the silver of the old Windrush stock, a

proof, if proof were needed, that environment is the decisive factor.

During the intermediate stages, when under-water food was presumably less abundant, and enemies like pike less pressing, the trout took the fly much more freely. Indeed, when there was no hatch of natural Mayfly they could often be induced to rise by simulating one. Floating an artificial gently and steadily over some likely spot for twenty minutes would often bring about one or two tentative rises, and finally a business-like 'chop,' resulting in capture. Such tactics, alas! do not seem to entice the well-fed fish of to-day.

## CHAPTER XII

### MARRIAGE

(1903)

Miss Rivington; Bruges; the Midland Railway; a book on Constable, James Orrock; Norwich; end of the Vale Press; marriage; Switzerland; a letter from Fry; negotiations for the 'Burlington Magazine.'

THE prospect of the closing down of the Vale Press had, at first, excited no more than mild speculation as to future employment. Speculation suddenly turned to anxiety when I found that I wished to get married to one of my Rivington cousins. The Rivington family consisted of two branches, one devoted to printing and publishing, the other to the law. The legal branch, together with my father's old friend Mrs. William Rivington, had shown me consistent kindness all through my years of trouble. Charles Robert Rivington, the head of the Rivington solicitors' firm and Registrar of the Stationers' Company, was no exception. A man of wide interests, he spent much of his time in Westmorland, on estates which he had inherited from Miss Hill, a relative of his first wife. In virtue of his work on the Register of the Stationers' Company he had been elected F.S.A. and, among other good deeds, after ferreting out the exact position of the house in which Hans Holbein died, had privately and unostentatiously put up a tablet to the painter's memory in the appropriate parish church, St. Andrew Undershaft. In the summer of 1901 he happened to give a dinner-party at Hurlingham, where I sat next to his daughter Florence, a professional violinist, whom I had not seen for several years, since she had only recently returned to London after a long illness.

No less resolute and independent than artistically sensi-

tive, she had been trained at Darmstadt, studying the piano and the violin. Now she had settled at Hampstead as a sub-Professor of the violin at the Hampstead Conservatoire, under a Cecil Sharpe not yet entirely absorbed by English folk-songs. I fell an immediate victim, but the way at first was not always easy. One moment of very black despair was temporarily lightened by meeting an old school-fellow in a Sloane Square restaurant, and discovering that he too was in a similar desperate plight. He found vent for his feelings in a novel which still has a place among his many delightful contributions to literature. My gloom gave place to fury. I *would* prove I was a painter, and in that mood produced *The Portsmouth Road*, which I still regard as the best of my early products. The scene was found near Witley Heath, and the middle distance, crowded with little birch-trees and other soft Surrey foliage (which I generally find unmanageable), came right at the very first effort. It was painted, tree by tree, with a small sable brush, in pure colour upon a rubbing of raw umber, in about an hour. I often tried the method afterwards, but never had the same success with it. I kept the picture by me for some years, partly as an example and encouragement, partly for sentimental reasons. Then, after exhibition in 1904, it got sold in New Zealand.

The change in my fortune came suddenly in July 1902, just when I had to go over to Bruges, to write about the famous exhibition of that year for the 'Athenaeum.' Bruges overflowed with visitors. From the hotels I was driven to cafés, and from cafés to 'In De Palingpot,' securing there a coffin-shaped attic, to the discomfiture of several rival tourists. One of them had to take an unsavoury cupboard under the stairs, the remainder to resume their slum wanderings. After dinner at a café, I settled at a round table under a street-lamp, and there composed, with the local pen and the local stationery, a singularly unattractive letter to my prospective father-in-law disclosing the situation. But when I had done the picture-job (my notes, even

now, seem pretty accurate), all was made easy. Robert Rivington apparently had views of his own as to my past history; made allowances for my present unsatisfactory position, and wished me luck.

I was due to dine that evening with the other branch of the family, and being full of my happiness, asked them as we sat down to dinner for their congratulations. The request was received with round-eyed open-mouthed silence, broken at last by the horrified question, 'And do you mean to say that Robert has given his consent?' My affirmative rendered the party almost reverential. I was puzzled, until a blushing inquiry over the port revealed the secret. The existence of two young step-brothers had been overlooked, and their sister was thought to be her father's heiress. Correcting the mistake gave visible relief, and restored our normal friendly relations.

At the time I did not recognize what an effect upon my painting this matrimonial connexion with Appleby was to produce. Not only were the Westmorland fells to become familiar: the mere journey North by the Midland line was to be a continual inspiration and pleasure. Its comfortable restaurant-cars were more than compensation for the inferiority of the permanent way to that of the L.N.W.R.; their method of service saved the third-class passenger from the disconcerting invasions between Crewe and my native Preston which characterized the rival route. And, after the first flat hundred miles of the Midlands were passed, the industrial phenomena by the wayside, whether of fiery life or of melancholy decay, revived and reinforced my early impressions of Lancashire. The mighty mounds of Clay Cross and a mysterious expanse of ruins near Rotherham became irresistible attractions as the train rushed by. North of Leeds, the Brontë country and the hills of Craven led up to ancestral Stainforth and Ribbleshead Moor with its three tutelary giants, Pen-y-ghent, Ingleborough and Wharfedale. Finally, after crossing the Pennine summit, came the run down the gorge of Mallerstang into the wide Eden Valley.

Never had such a diversity of gifts thematic been provided automatically for future exploration.

My big book, 'Constable, and his Influence on Landscape Painting,' was now finished. I had done my best to identify the subjects of his pictures and sketches by visiting the various places where Constable had worked, and to arrange his products in chronological order, by their topography and by technical comparisons between dated and undated paintings, being conscious that in other respects I could not do all that I wanted to do. It was not easy for a totally unknown clerk to get access to pictures in private collections; and, as Sir Charles Tennant remarked when he showed me his treasures, 'You are a very young man to be writing a book.' Nor could I add much to Leslie's narrative. A batch of Constable's letters indeed was offered to me, of which Leslie had made but little use, but the price asked was more than the whole payment I was to get from the publishers. I think Lord Plymouth afterwards acquired them for his book on Constable. Judging from the single glance at them which I was allowed, these letters were very different in general tone from the polite extracts given by Leslie. Constable's outspoken and contemptuous comments upon his contemporaries not only helped to explain the tardiness of his acceptance by them, but would have infused some liveliness into my text.<sup>1</sup> The historical and personal part of the book had thus to follow conventional lines; but the chronological sequence of Constable's pictures and sketches was so carefully worked out that I still find it useful.

Among those whom I had occasion to approach in my researches was Mr. James Orrock. That ingenious collector received me in dressing-gown and slippers at his big house in Bedford Square, crammed with pictures, porcelain, furniture and miscellaneous objects of art, 'all of the 'ighest quality.' The porcelain looked good: a glance at the pictures enjoined caution. He showed me one pleasing

<sup>1</sup> The recently published 'Letters of John Constable R.A. to C. R. Leslie R.A.' (London: Constable; 1931), display similar frankness.



Constable, a view of the house at Dedham with 'Isabel Constable on the horse in the foreground.' I timidly asked if it could be Isabel? The picture dated from 1811-12, years before Isabel was born. 'Well, if it isn't Isabel it's somebody else' was the airy reply. I noticed a queer discrepancy in another picture. 'Oh, a clever man can soon put *that* right'; as if touching up or repainting Old Masters was the most natural thing in the world. When the remains of his collection came to Christie's, a year or two later, I had to try to separate the few sheep from the interesting half-breeds and positive goats in that variegated flock. While I was puzzling over these problems, Mr. W. G. Rawlinson, the Turner collector, told me of a curious experience. Calling at Bedford Square, he had been taken upstairs, and left in a passage while Mr. Orrock was found. Seeing an open door, Mr. Rawlinson looked in and hastily withdrew. A Turner painting rested on a chair; on the easel by it was a facsimile, the paint still wet.

The agreement with Messrs. Constable for the book's publication led to an unexpected result. Among other stipulations, I bargained for a final payment of £100 to the author when the edition (a limited one) went out of print. I called one day to inquire how the book was selling. Less than twenty copies were left, and it suddenly struck us both that my precious agreement would actually penalize the publishers for selling them. We laughed and compromised. Since then I have read and amended many a publisher's agreement, but never again have I drawn one up.

Some months later the redoubtable T. W. H. Crosland engaged me to write a little book on 'Pictures and Picture-Collecting,' for a new series of which he was editor. Cash, in view of my wedding, was not to be despised, and in the course of obtaining it after I had done the work, I found that those who are accustomed to attack others can be quite hurt when others turn upon them. The book itself is naturally now quite out of date, but the appendix on 'Municipal Collecting,' written just after I had taken a big

dose of Swift, still makes me smile, especially the final paragraph.

The need of settling some little problems of the Norwich School took me again to Norwich. The changes there in the last nine years were almost incredible. The quiet tumble-down city of Crome had become a hive of bustling modernity. The old Royal Hotel, recalling in its solemn fustiness the days of Dickens, had given place to a huge structure, thoroughly up-to-date. Electric light blazed everywhere; electric trams buzzed and clanged past its palatial doors. Luckily Mr. James Reeve, the veteran authority of the Castle Museum, had not also vanished, and the hours spent with him, his collections and his memories of painters and rogues, mostly rogues, gave me an invaluable framework for future study. The elder Paul, for instance, one of Crome's most gifted followers, had taken refuge in London, because he was mixed up in the murder of a girl at Norwich. In London, as I knew, he had maintained himself for the rest of his life by forging Cromes and Constables, with the help of a son, whom Herbert Horne remembered as a venerable copyist at the National Gallery, much patronized by dealers who needed eighteenth-century portraits. Mr. Reeve knew good drawing when he saw it, and produced with pride some studies of horses in water-colour which had recently been made by a young painter from the Norwich Art School. So completely accomplished were they that I made a note of the young artist's name. It was Munnings.

Forgers particularly interested me, and I had some thought of compiling a work on 'Forgers and Forgeries of the British School.' Investigation into their secrets was not always easy. Once, when trying to 'pump' a dealer with great experience in such things, I was pulled up sharp with, 'Young man, don't you go asking too many questions about —, or you'll be getting yourself knocked on the head one of these dark nights.' 'Jimmy' Webb, the reputed maker of so many Constables and Turners, was an especial favourite, and to discover several signed works by him in a private

collection at Oxford, with a technique identical in many respects with the imitations, was a notable experience. Once in a little shop in Shaftesbury Avenue I saw a small version by him of Constable's *Lock*, which I thought I might buy as a specimen. The price asked was ten pounds. I offered five, saying that was enough for an imitation. 'If you know that,' said the shopman, 'you ought to know that Jimmy Webb is worth eight pounds in the trade, any day.' By an odd coincidence, this very study, or its twin brother, was presented to me more than thirty years later by my friend Louis Clarke.

The Norwich visit was prompted, in part, by a request from Robert Dell to write an article on Cotman for the 'Burlington Magazine,' which came out in March 1903, on a scale of unexampled magnificence. Only a year before, the 'Connoisseur' had scored an instant success, and my cousin Walter Clay had done his best to get me a place on the staff, by introducing me to J. T. Bailey and others who conducted it. But a luncheon with them at the Trocadero was not a success. They seemed to me too sanguine, too happy-go-lucky. I, no doubt, seemed to them pedantic and over-cautious. Some of the people I had met at that luncheon had now seceded to found the 'Burlington.' The first numbers were indeed marvellous, but I did not see how they could possibly pay expenses, and it was with commerce just then that I was necessarily concerned.

I was to be married in July, had taken a house in London, spent nearly all my small savings upon furniture, and the Vale Press was to close down finally on June 30th. Ricketts drew up a scheme for a new joint publishing business, just to help me through, but I did not like the idea of being a drag upon him. Laurence Housman most kindly suggested that I should succeed him as critic to the 'Manchester Guardian'; Rendall offered to extend the scope of the work I did for the 'Athenaeum'; a big firm of advertising agents in the City offered a job worth £500 a year to start with. This last I was preparing to accept, though the people were

total strangers, when Robert Rivington put his foot down. Art was the thing I liked, which I had studied, and by which I was making my way: I had better stick to it. Even if for the moment it brought in very little, the tide would be sure to turn. With all my desire for independence, it was impossible to fight against a decision so authoritative, so considerate of my natural inclinations, and so contrary to current family opinion. Not without internal qualms we acquiesced in what seemed rather a rash gamble with Providence.

At the end of June, the Vale Press duly and inexorably ceased to be. The final meeting was attended by H. A. Moncrieff, Rivington's old manager, who after auditing the books and accounts proceeded to report upon them. Hacon, assuming for the occasion the dignity and severity of a judge, pressed him closely as to the correctness of the figures and then as to the disposal of the alleged profits. 'Why! You've had them yourselves,' was honest Moncrieff's answer, 'and I have never seen so wonderful a return from so small a capital since Arrowsmith (?) published "The Mystery of a Hansom Cab."' Lastly, the value of the trade accounts still owing to the firm was challenged. I vouched for them, and was offered £50 if I could collect them in a fortnight. This, with the aid of a small discount, proved easy enough, and the partners presented me with a further £100. As a matter of fact, the total bad debts of the firm in seven years amounted to £1, 11s. 6d.

On July 21st we were married at St. Paul's, Avenue Road, Laurence Binyon acting as best man, and losing in the subsequent confusion his new top-hat. When we set off for Switzerland, being unaccustomed to the ways of *trains-de-luxe*, my blunders in the matter of luggage and language were enough to ruin for good my reputation as a traveller. Switzerland, however, was no longer the fog-bound desolation I remembered, but such a place of glittering snow, sharp rocks and blue skies, as to occupy both my wife's little camera and my little sketch-book, confirming incidentally

the impressions of brightness I had received four years earlier in Italy.

Had I studied under some Paris-trained artist I should, no doubt, have learned much earlier the fascination of light in a landscape, but Shannon and Ricketts had directed my attention to the traditional technique of oil-painting and to design, as exemplified in the works by Old Masters which were visible in London. These, excepting of course the Primitives, being almost always low in tone, either by intention or from the accumulation of old varnishes, drew me to think of similar depth and richness as ideals grander than those of the Impressionists, who looked more chalky then than they do now. Their whites have grown more translucent with age. It was doubtless a healthy discipline to have studied traditional design and technique, but the discipline had already lasted long enough; and to graft new and brighter methods upon that sober stock was henceforth a continuous effort.

Coming to Meiringen, I was thrilled to recognize there the scene of the drawing by J. R. Cozens, *A Valley with Winding Streams*, at South Kensington, which had always seemed to contain the quintessence of his genius. Though the canalization of the Aar had done away with the meandering waters, the crags were unmistakable. It was exciting too, after clambering up the hillside to the Reichenbach, to find such a mass of water plunging into a cold black abyss as fully satisfied my natural taste for terrifying aspects of nature. Dr. Moriarty could not have chosen a more appropriate place of extinction for my famous namesake. On the way back we were to spend a week in Paris, and we spent it almost entirely in the hotel. My wife, to her keen disappointment and extreme discomfort, had a sharp attack of quinsy, and could only get a glimpse of the sights from a carriage on our very last day. I must add that, in defiance of the doctor's orders, she insisted on getting out at the Louvre, and being helped upstairs as far as the Salon Carré.

From the Continent we travelled to Appleby, and there I

1903]

## MARRIAGE

hooked and landed a trout of over  $2\frac{3}{4}$  lbs., from a chance cast with a Devon minnow, made merely by way of demonstration to a fellow-guest at Castle Bank. I have fished the river since for over thirty strenuous years without getting a trout of more than half the weight. While enjoying these amenities of life, somewhat nervously, since I knew that they must be short-lived, I was roused and recalled to action by an express letter from Roger Fry. Since it affected my whole future I had better reproduce it.

14 NEW BURLINGTON STREET, LONDON, W.,  
Sept. 7, 1903.

MY DEAR HOLMES,—I have been trying for days to get into communication with you for days on most important business. It is this, the Burlington is in extremis. It is a really sound thing I believe, but has been run on insufficient capital and with absolutely no business method. Berenson and I are only just now aware of the true state of things, and to-day have interviewed Spottiswoode about it. I believe the only thing to save it is this. To get you to be joint editor with Dell at a salary of £300 for the first six months—after which if, as I feel sure it will be, it is a success yr. salary should be raised or your work lessened. For this £300 you would give the mornings only and work at getting the business straight, and also give your advice on the general editing and sub-editing of the paper. In any case it may be worth yr. while to think of this quite apart from a disinterested goodwill to the cause of art study wh. will suffer a serious blow if this fails.

I am able to make this offer because Dell will agree to anything we can think out in order to save the situation. Wire to me at High buildings, Fernhurst, Haslemere. Berenson and I come up to interview the Spottiswoodes on Thursday. The ideal thing would be for you to come up a day earlier and be present at the whole meeting.

In any case wire to me at Fernhurst (for wires leave out Haslemere) what you can do for us.—Yrs. in haste and very urgently,

ROGER E. FRY.

Naturally we lost no time in coming up to 58 Kensington Park Road, a chaos of piled packing-cases, and, while my wife returned to her work at the Hampstead Conservatoire,

I rushed hither and thither in the attempt to introduce a modest degree of order into the affairs of the 'Burlington Magazine.' More than three hectic months were spent among the ever-shifting sands of company-promotion; the changes in the situation being so many and so complicated that to enumerate them would be neither profitable nor possible. I can recall only a few salient features of that confused struggle in the liquidation-mud.

To begin with, I went down into Surrey to learn about the situation from Fry and his wife, who were staying there with the Berensons. That delightful artist Mrs. Fry was deeply, almost too deeply, interested in the crisis. Her enthusiasm and her delicate wit had helped, I think, to make the Berensons consider whether they might not take the predominant part in reviving the magazine. But when the predominance seemed likely to extend to criticism as well as to finance, I became apprehensive. Friends like Claude Phillips and other English writers of repute, not to mention such authorities as Bode in Berlin, would not exactly welcome a Berensonian dictatorship, and the job of the nominal editor would be no bed of roses. Luckily, perhaps, the amount of capital that might be required for control was so considerable as to cause the idea to be postponed, and finally to be dropped.

Since the 'Burlington' was a handsome and attractive magazine, even its creditors could not relinquish the hope of a resurrection, and to that end encouraged Fry's efforts to raise new capital. On this errand we tramped about London together: but at the money-begging business I proved to be utterly useless, being fit only to check figures, work endless calculations, and pick holes in the plausible schemes which various interested parties laid before us. Fry on the other hand was simply magnificent. No rebuff could shake his determination to carry the matter through. The promise of £1000, given promptly and quietly by Herbert Cook after we had explained our ideas to him, was our first great encouragement, and consoled us for the refusals we had met

from some other prominent 'art-patrons.' Mrs. Herringham, Mr. Wyndham Cook, Max Rosenheim, Campbell Dodgson, were among the pioneer subscribers (bless them all!).

Suddenly, in the middle of October, and of these exertions, Fry was put *hors de combat*. Mrs. Fry was taken so seriously ill that he had to remain in Surrey in constant attendance upon her. 'I'm almost at my wits' end with anxiety,' he writes, 'and momentary hope and fear. I know you will understand and act for the best. This wretched Burlington is part responsible for the whole thing: it wd. be terrible if that failed now, so I must resign it to you for a few days more.' Knowing my disabilities as a raiser of capital, I could only return with desperate energy to the business of negotiating.

The chief question in this financial nightmare was, 'With whom can we most safely negotiate?' First came the original proprietors of the magazine, the Savile Publishing Company, but their days were numbered. Indeed, the magazine had practically passed out of their hands, and was being carried on by the printers and other large creditors. Their goodwill was essential, yet the actual property in the magazine would be vested at the end of October in the very business-like liquidator, Mr. F. S. Salaman. Also the editor, Robert Dell, was endeavouring independently to raise fresh capital, and thereby retain his place under any new dispensation. His chief supporters were Lord Windsor and, I think, Alfred Beit, who had been prompted thereto by Bode. Bode's action deserves to be remembered as a rare piece of international generosity. How many people here, I wonder, would try to raise money for a German magazine?

Four separate eagles, in addition to ourselves, were thus hovering round the sick-bed of the 'Burlington.' The advantage of position lay with the printers. Not only could they hold up production at any moment but, as owners or controllers of a considerable group of papers and magazines, they possessed expert knowledge of publishing in addition to its machinery. They were ingenious too. With Dell's little capital to help them, they conceived a plan for taking



over the magazine, and for putting it in charge of D. S. MacColl, already connected with them as the successful editor of the 'Architectural Review.' Though I was working every day upon the finance of the 'Burlington,' and was in constant touch with the promoters of the scheme, I heard nothing of it until MacColl, with characteristic loyalty, referred the offer to Fry, and then declined it, so that the field might be free for us.

The liquidator's aim and duty were to sell the Magazine for the best price he could get. He had meanwhile to produce the November and December numbers, at a loss which made him doubly anxious to be rid of it. Dell, having been rudely shocked by the MacColl proposal, which would have left him out in the cold, was ready to make any reasonable arrangement for joining forces with us, and buying the 'Burlington' from the liquidator. He was, even then, a brilliant and experienced journalist, with a knowledge of writers upon art, their merits and their fads, which I totally lacked. On the other hand, I had practically managed the magazine for several months, though without any definite right to be there at all. When, therefore, our new company was formed, and the magazine passed into its legal possession on New Year's Day 1904, I was made Managing Director, as well as joint editor with Dell, an arrangement which suited us both, and worked thereafter without a hitch.

CHAPTER XIII

THE 'BURLINGTON MAGAZINE'

(1903-1909)

Troubles of an economist; Durer; Chantrey; questions of public policy; MacColl goes to Millbank; Fry enlists help in New York; collecting advertisements; some notable contributors; Anatole France in Rome; the *Flora* bust; National Gallery affairs.

THE table on which I am writing an article shakes under the blows with which Miss Dell, sitting just opposite, rattles off another article on her Remington; behind her, three cheery gentlemen, two of whom it will be my painful duty to lose very shortly (and they know it), are swopping stories; close by, on my right, an unsympathetic author alternately threatens and whines for money which I can't pay him. Such is my memory of 14 New Burlington Street, when I descended upon the 'Burlington Magazine' in December 1903.

Hardened as I was to the arithmetic of failure in book-publishing, the figures of magazine production astounded me. At every point money seemed to flow out; at none did any seem to come in. It was evident that Art, and high ideals, and all that, must take their chance until this financial landslide was arrested. Compared with his predecessors, the liquidator had been a stern economist; yet, if we could not improve upon his figures, our precious capital would scarcely last us three months. By an immediate move to 17 Berners Street we saved rent; by ruthless reduction of staff we saved salaries; but to cut down the cost of the magazine itself was not so simple. Authors and readers we might disregard; credit with advertisers must be risked; economies elsewhere were met with a threat of foreclosure.

To Sir Edgar Speyer, as the biggest business man among our backers, I went off with our dilemma. 'How did you answer them?' said he. I had told them to go to Jericho. 'I shouldn't have said *that*,' replied Sir Edgar, 'but Mr. Frank Dawes happens to be here, so we will consult him.' On that famous gentleman's coming, Sir Edgar explained in two minutes what had taken me fifteen, finally asking, 'What would *you* do?' 'Tell 'em to go to Hell' was the unexpected and consoling reply. Then to me, 'You can just say to Mr. X, with Mr. Frank Dawes's compliments, that it's no good; and you'll have no further trouble.' The moment I got back from Lothbury, I rang up and gave the message. It was received in silence, and our enforced economies proceeded without another word of protest. Even then we could only reduce the deficit on the magazine to a quarter of what it had been a month or two before; to turn the loss into a profit seemed impossible.

Fry, from the first, had seen what an influence the 'Burlington' might exert. Hitherto it had dealt almost exclusively with ancient art, with collecting and collectors. To widen its scope by including current problems was a novelty; but it soon became as much a part of my business as getting articles from the distinguished critics of the day, and anointing their scratches with editorial butter when they happened to squabble. More really embarrassing were certain veterans, whom I knew slightly, but whose contributions had to be rejected. I was compelled to decline election at the Athenaeum, because the list of members included several whose appeals in a club smoking-room would have been difficult to resist. On my hard editorial throne I felt comparatively safe, and the Civil Servants at the Union Club, which I joined somewhat later, were much too wise and too busy to touch upon our problems, except when I asked for help.

Only once or twice was I forced into the critical arena, as when Dürer's *Portrait of his Father* was bought for the National Gallery. Claude Phillips was to write about it; a special

photogravure plate was made, and printed, in honour of the occasion. At the very last moment, Phillips took fright, after reading the doubts expressed by Dürer specialists, like Friedländer and Dodgson, and threw up the job. So the task of defending our costly frontispiece fell to me.

When the picture was shown at Burlington House during the previous winter, I had examined it very carefully before writing an article in the 'Athenaeum,' emphasizing its fine quality. But Fry was among the picture's opponents. 'I hear,' he wrote, 'that you are writing on the Dürer, if it is not too late let me implore you to pause before writing an editorial backing up the purchase. It is not only that I definitely disagree with the view, and considering that owing to your article my voice is silenced in the "Athenaeum," I think that might weigh with you—but it is a question on which it is desirable that the Burlington should not commit itself unless we are quite certain to be right, or at least to command the respect of expert opinion.

'I know you formed your favourable opinion of the picture independently of Ricketts, but his support has doubtless given you greater confidence, and has perhaps prevented you from weighing quite impartially the very strong feeling of critics whose opinion on such a point—allowing every regard to Ricketts's extraordinary gifts—deserves very serious consideration.

'As a member of the consultative committee and known to be intimately connected with the Burlington, I should feel the position such an editorial would put me in very keenly, and might feel compelled to disown what I think is a hasty and unscholarly attribution.

'You will know that I do not wish to impose all my opinions on the Burlington, and you will hardly accuse me of intolerance, and I trust you to see that I am only desirous in the interests of the Magazine that it should not be hastily and prematurely committed to a line which admits, to say the least, some danger of putting it out of touch with the best opinion in England and abroad.'

Such a warning made me doubly cautious. I had already been round to Trafalgar Square to collect Sir Edward Poynter's evidence, only to discover that he had relied chiefly upon my own 'Athenaeum' article. Luckily, close examination of the picture and its inscription yielded more positive proofs. There was no need for hedging or withdrawal; Fry waived his protest; the article duly appeared; met with no effective counterblast, and the portrait was accepted, to the delight of Ricketts, who had voiced his opinion of its critics with unquotable pungency.

Two months later Ricketts writes from Broadstairs: 'We have been shouting with joy over the Chantrey Report, it has given us a new home phrase "Chantrey would not like it." I think your evidence reads all right, there is a John-Bull-Jun. ring about it, next to the hesitating and self-conscious insincerities of our friend R. F. Old Carlyle posed one or two stumpers to you and D. S. M. I am bound to say I think the last and Guthrie both were admirable as damaging witnesses. Conway was excellent, his evidence was sane and constructive and above the fads of the moment.' This fight of MacColl's for the better administration of the Chantrey Bequest [resulting in the Committee of the House of Lords, to which Ricketts refers] provided the 'Burlington' with much material for comment. The administration of Galleries and Museums gave us still more.

Like Shannon and Ricketts I was a 'museum specimen,' proud of our London collections, grateful for what I had learned in them, and keen to see them perfected. The appointment of a Minister of the Fine Arts appeared, at first sight, to be the proper solution. Closer study of the idea, and a casual remark by Lord Windsor, a helpful member of our Board and First Commissioner of Works, as to the inaccessibility of some of his ministerial colleagues, revealed an unexpected and quite fatal flaw. Such a minister would have no real power. Would not any Premier, when Cabinet-making, find that there was one supporter left who must be provided for, yet could not be trusted with any responsible

office? To make the poor weakling Minister of the Fine Arts would be the obvious way of escape. He could do no harm there; and no good either. So the idea of an Art Ministry was quietly shelved.

The steady drain of works of art from England was the anxiety at the back of all our thoughts. We had deplored it long before 1900; at the end of 1903, while Fry and I were struggling to save the 'Burlington,' the feeling had grown so general that, on the initiative of MacColl and others, the National Art-Collections Fund came into being. Ricketts gave me an account of the inaugural meeting. All the recognized authorities, including the recognized obstructionists, attended, and, regardless of the real promoters, the latter elected themselves as the Committee. So surprised was the meeting that the election came near to being approved by stupefied silence. Then from the body of the hall a lady rose and, speaking with reckless, breathless frankness, pointed out that none of those responsible for the meeting had been chosen, while most of the chosen were just the people who were not wanted. Thanks to this plucky action by Mrs. Herringham, a new election had to take place, and the Fund was properly started.

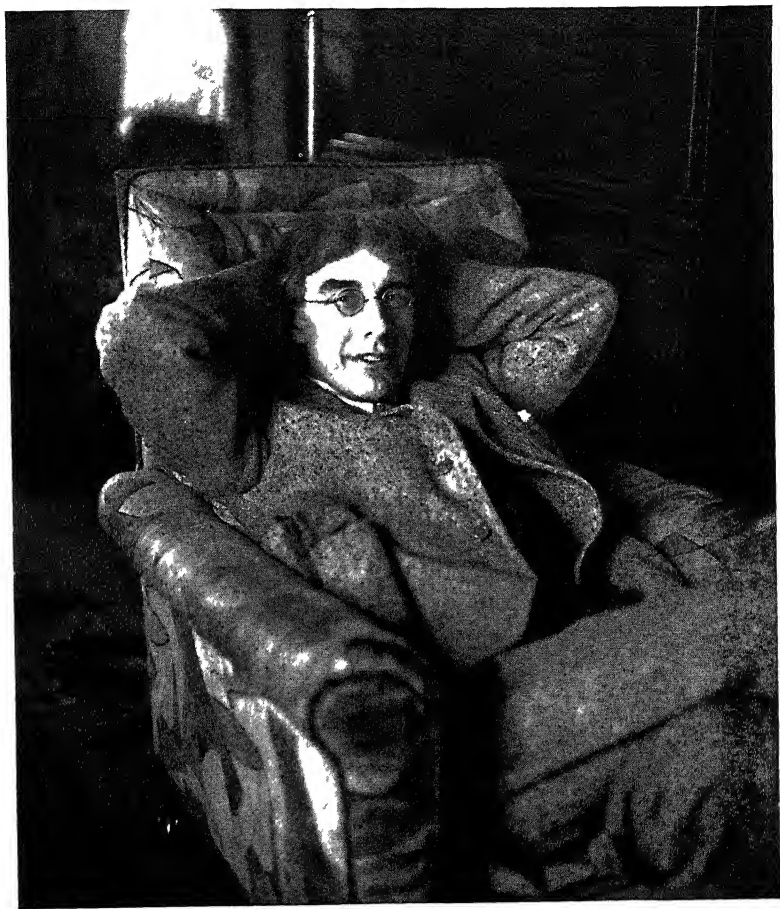
Articles on such current topics, as I have said, had originally been conceived as a means of widening the 'Burlington's' appeal, and giving variety to the contents. But during 1905 current topics became more exciting than aesthetic discoveries. The fierce disputes in the Press over the 'Rokeby Velazquez' attracted universal notice, driving us finally to draft suggestions for a constructive policy in 'The Lesson of the Rokeby Velazquez' (January 1906). The essential feature of it, which I had previously adumbrated in the 'Times,' was 'To save for the National Gallery at any cost some twelve or fifteen pictures of the highest importance, which, if once lost, could never be replaced.' Nearly twenty years passed before an agreement was made with the Treasury on these very lines, 'The Wilton Diptych' and the 'Cornaro Titian' being the first fruits.

Another outcome of these discussions was the principle of exhibiting to the public only the best things in a museum, and keeping the rest as a 'Reference Section' for special students. It was suggested (April 1906) by the methods of the new Museum at Boston, and has since been applied with advantage to the National Portrait Gallery and the National Gallery.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Balfour, a professed lover of the arts, did absolutely nothing for them that I can remember, and through this critical year of 1905 left the National Gallery without a Director. Claude Phillips was getting old and had made enemies, as active scholars in those days were bound to do. Fry, in consequence, became the fancied candidate, and gave me an illuminating account of his interview in Whitehall. After explaining what he had done in the world of art to a high official, who appeared to understand and to care very little about the matter, he was finally asked, rather testily, 'Yes, but isn't there *anyone* whose name we should know, who could tell us something about you?' Fry was nonplussed. At last he timidly ventured, 'Perhaps my father, Sir Edward Fry . . .' 'What!' interrupted the other, 'Are you a son of Sir Edward Fry? Why didn't you say so at once? That will be all right.'

Nevertheless no offer of the Directorship arrived until Fry, following the example of Sir Purdon Clarke, had accepted a proposal from the Metropolitan Museum, and was on the point of sailing for New York. So Holroyd's appointment to Trafalgar Square followed in due course, leaving the Tate Gallery Keepership vacant. Here Fry's experience came in useful. MacColl was the candidate of the younger generation; but the Academic opposition to him was expected to be formidable, in view of his Chantrey Bequest triumph. It was to him, and to him alone, that we owed the House of Lords' inquiry, and the removal, or at least the ventilation, of the main cause of difference between the Royal Academy and the Outsiders.

When MacColl talked over the Tate vacancy with me at



ROGER FRY

*(Photo : A. C. Cooper and Sons)*





Gatti's, I told him about Fry's interview, and asked if he had any sort of personal connexion with the Prime Minister. It appeared that his father's church had been upon the Campbell-Bannerman estate. That was of course enough. Campbell-Bannerman gave MacColl an interview, remembered his father, grasped the position at once, and delivered judgment, 'It seems to me that we must do as we do with Bishops. Firrst we appoint a High Churrch Bishop and please the High Churrch party; then we appoint a Low Churrch Bishop and please the Low Churrch party. By appointing Holroyd we have pleased Poynter and that lot: now the other side must have their turrrn.' As a matter of fact the opposition proved less than was anticipated. MacColl the official would be less dangerous to the Academy than MacColl the free-lance journalist: Sargent, among others, backed his claim; in due course it triumphed, and the appointment quickly justified all our hopes.

Fry's departure for America, disastrous as we felt it to be for the National Gallery, proved a godsend to our journalism. The moment was indeed critical. In spite of all economies, our working capital was nearly exhausted. But Fry was not. He lost no opportunity of pressing our claims upon his new associates, and though more than once afterwards we were in sore straits, his enthusiasm ultimately moved Mr. Pierpont Morgan, Mr. John G. Johnson, his friend Mr. J. W. Simpson, and Mr. Henry Walters of Baltimore, to take up shares sufficient to carry us through till 1909, when, for the first time, our balance-sheet showed a small profit.

On one occasion Fry's energy as a spell-binder recoiled upon him rather cruelly. 'Was ever poor devil so hoist with his own petard?' he writes to me. 'Here was I swearing to Frick that he couldn't invest £300 better than in the Burlington, and behold he meant to give me the money for advice etc. to him, and so I have to keep all the savings I've made in our blessed business where they may go to a liquidator, or a mortgage or something any day—and think

what I could have done if H. C. Frick had been so good as to invest the money for *me*, instead of I (thinking it was his) for *him*. Alas, Alas. But now I mean to devote serious attention to the Burlington. No more nonsense for me about original research, serious criticism and such bunkum. Give it 'em hot and strong I say, The Picture of the Year, How to collect Carpet-bags, Alma Tadema at home—, Oh you'll see.'

Of the helpers whom Fry thus secured I met only Mr. Morgan and Mr. Johnson. Mr. Morgan so overwhelmed me at our first interview by his terrifying look and monumental silence, that I could hardly speak, much less explain our need for money, which was the purport of my mission. Subsequently, when we got to work on his collections at Prince's Gate, he put his fierceness aside and proved excellent company. We had hardly got upstairs when Alfred de Rothschild, the despot of the National Gallery Board, came to call. Mr. Morgan, promising to come down and see him in a few minutes, started going over his cabinet of miniatures with me. We were still discussing them, and the mild, exquisite and gigantic cigar provided for me was smoked down to the butt, when our talk was interrupted by a timid reminder from a manservant that Mr. de Rothschild had been waiting downstairs for more than an hour.

Mr. John G. Johnson, perhaps the only American collector who trusted entirely to his own judgment, was then building up the varied and interesting series of paintings of all schools and periods which he bequeathed to his native Philadelphia. With this keen intelligence were united great kindliness, charm of manner and an independent honesty, which caused him to be trusted and consulted by the most powerful men of his day in the Eastern States. Though but a lawyer of relatively moderate means, he had, like Mr. Morgan, great influence over the kings of finance, and this, coupled with his personal generosity, enabled the 'Burlington' to beat out at last from the perilous shoals of finance among which it had laboured for six years.

The business of preparing lectures for Oxford at first made serious inroads upon managerial and editorial time, but when things were at their worst a friend, Algernon Smith, did me good service as a secretary, and our very able typist, Miss Armstrong, could be trusted with almost anything. In October 1906, my colleague Dell, who was much interested in French affairs, and particularly in neo-Catholicism, decided to take a post as Foreign Correspondent in Paris. He was succeeded early in 1907 by my Brasenose friend, Harold Child, who helped me thenceforth with the unfailing tact and fine literary taste which have long since found a worthier field of action. When I now read what I believe to be his articles in the 'Times,' I blush to think that for two years or more I should have been blindly content to take the senior place. Our little community was otherwise unchanged, and worked on happily without a single hitch, Frank Woollen and Gordon Stables controlling their respective sections of the business as well and as unobtrusively as they do still.

Not possessing Fry's 'capitalist-appeal,' I set myself to helping our advertisement revenue, the one thing needful for every sort of independent journalism. I knew most of the big dealers, and discovered that I could be quite shameless in telling them that it was their duty, as well as their interest, to give us a helping hand in that way. At the outset I had a stroke of luck. While talking, with no apparent result, to the superior being who controlled the London headquarters of a great international firm, our conversation was interrupted by the entry of a sturdy man in a rather shabby raincoat, carrying a heavy bag. The superb one crumpled up before the new-comer, and followed him meekly into some inner sanctum. Emerging after a few moments, he said that Mr. X, the head of the whole firm, would like to meet me. The bag contained some excellent miniatures. These I duly admired, explaining in the course of our discussion how it was he had found me there. Mr. X happened to be at war with the no less

mighty firm of Y. 'Does Y advertise?' he asked. 'No? Then I'll make him. I'll take a whole page for a year; just my name is enough to put on it. He'll have to follow suit next month: and see that you make him pay well.'

Y was not the only one to follow suit; but several held out. When I approached Lockett Agnew he nearly exploded. He had never advertised in his life. Then, in the end, characteristically, 'Well! I'll give the magazine £100, and you can do what you dam well please with it.' Mr. Asher Wertheimer and Mr. Sulley were two tough nuts which I entirely failed to crack. Mr. Wertheimer would listen politely for any length of time, but always said 'No' at the end of it: Sulley promptly reduced the conversation to an exchange of cynical and quite unprofitable chaff.

Nor shall I forget my first interview with the friend who is now Lord Duveen, at which he calmly proposed to buy a whole number of the 'Burlington,' in order to describe and illustrate a collection which he had just purchased. It was vain, at first, for me to urge that such Napoleonic measures were contrary to our basic principles; he would take no refusal. The mere pressure of his determination and enthusiasm was difficult to resist, indeed I found his energy quite fascinating, as I have done ever since, and when I finally said 'No,' it was said with more qualification than our custom was. Another friend, C. H. Collins Baker, came to me very differently. Among the articles submitted was one upon Foucquet which we could not use, but the handwriting of the manuscript was so exceptional that I was curious to see the author. When he called, we became friends on the spot. It was hot weather, and his democratic suspicion of Professors and Editors was allayed by finding me in shirt-sleeves.

Of the older English authorities, Mr. W. H. James Weale, with his long white beard and his semi-blindness, was undoubtedly the most picturesque, and the most scrupulous in scholarship; Claude Phillips our closest ally. Innumerable letters gave us the benefit of his irritations and his

discoveries, his doubts, his likes and his dislikes. Others might find him difficult. I found him invariably generous, with a rare conviction as to what was right and what was wrong which enabled him, trembling all the time at the social and official dangers which such audacity involved, to tell the truth in the 'Daily Telegraph.' Superior young persons might sneer at his enthusiasms, his emotionalism. Yet through them Phillips created a lively general interest in Art which did excellent service to all connected with it, until, after his death, the light he kindled was gradually dimmed and then extinguished by the clever, tedious theoretics of the New Age.

But Claude Phillips had other weapons besides enthusiasm. His long experience of European picture-galleries, his wonderful memory and his repute as a critic, gave his pronouncements an authority which no one since his day (and perhaps before it) has exercised in this country. I am not forgetting Ruskin or Berenson. Their work is a permanent contribution to English literature, but they did not live, as Phillips did, in the middle of the critical arena, taking part week after week in contemporary discussion, and suffering in the end from the orator's fate. As with Haterius, '*Canorum illud et profluens cum ipso simul extinctum est.*' With the death of Claude Phillips, there vanished a force working for righteousness, through public opinion and through the pressmen who followed his lead, which made even the politicians take heed to their ways.

The period did not lack tea-cup storms, and graver editorial problems. My friend Dr. Butler, for example, created no little sensation in the Oriental dove-cots, both here and on the Continent, when he first pointed out that 'Persian' lustre-ware had been invented centuries earlier in Egypt. 'The man doesn't even know Arabic,' said one famous authority, when I went to consult him before publishing this heretical contribution; 'if you take my advice, you'll have nothing to do with it.' Fortunately I happened to have read Dr. Butler's 'Arab Conquest of Egypt,' and

knew that, so far as intimate acquaintance with Arab authorities went, he had nothing to fear from anyone. And, in due course, he turned the tables upon all Europe, by proving that it was they who had not gone to the original sources, but had all trusted to an imperfect French summary.

The Berlin Museum, I remember, sent a long refutation of Dr. Butler's views. I earned their gratitude by keeping it back, until they had seen his quite conclusive defence and were glad to withdraw from the fray. It was impossible not to be impressed by the general interest in the arts which the Germans then displayed. As their trade prospered and their wealth increased, German collectors and students became more and more numerous; German critics already wielded a sway that was world-wide, and altogether, from the cultural point of view, Germany set an example which, at the time, it was only human to envy.

Among others, this Egypto-Persian controversy excited that remarkable connoisseur, Dr. F. R. Martin, who had left the Swedish diplomatic service for the profession of collecting. The carpets, drawings, miniatures and ceramics of the East, with pictures and bronzes now and then, were his quarry; his province extended from Faenza to Peking. He was the first, I think, to descry the artistic links which connect Greece and Rome with primitive China, and was quick to foresee the tracks which research and collecting would afterwards follow. His foresight extended to politics. I remember his dismay when Baron Aehrenthal annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. 'He is a very stupid man, and has ruined his country.' Martin promptly set about finding a place to which he could safely retire when the inevitable European War began. Settling upon Florence, he purchased a villa there, in which he lived more or less undisturbed until peace came. Then he made his great mistake. He backed the old Italian constitution against the Fascists, a course which led, very naturally, to endless trouble, aggravated later by a ruinous confidence in Kreuger the financier, and by a breakdown in health. His death some two years ago

in a Viennese hospital was unnoticed by a world suffering more formidable losses, but his name will survive not only in the Museum at Faenza, but in his splendid publications, which all Orientalists know. Since Martin had met many of the personages of his time, his conversation was as enlightening as his comings and goings were mysterious, his handwriting indecipherable. Indeed, to lick one of his articles into shape was a task which strained for the time being the bonds of a valued friendship.

A discussion in the 'Burlington' as to the nature and origin of the cracks in the Sistine ceiling reminds me of Mr. Bernard Shaw. As he happened to be in Rome when the ceiling was under repair, it was arranged that he should see the frescoes from the scaffolding erected for that purpose, in company with Anatole France. To their surprise, the visitors found that the scaffolding had to be reached from outside, by a long series of ladders extending up to an opening cut at the top of the immense chapel wall. Up the ladders they toiled accordingly, stout Anatole France in front, to find, when they attained the dizzy summit, that the approach to the opening was by a single plank stretched over the abyss. Anatole France hesitated a while, then he bowed his head, *crossed himself*, and took the passage at a run. The descent, according to Ricketts, was hardly less unexpected. 'Anatole France had to be carried down from the scaffoldage; an Italian workman ran to his rescue, seized him by the waist, and carried him down, upside down like a baby. The thought of this contingency will probably make me stay below, whilst Shannon inspects the frescoes for the honour of British Art.'

Fry and, more rarely, MacColl contributed not a little to the 'Burlington's' literary repute. Fry's phrase for Beardsley, 'the Fra Angelico of Satanism,' could not easily be bettered. Occasional writers, too, did excellent service in giving variety to unadulterated scholarship. Among the wittiest was undoubtedly Robbie Ross, but his allusive, incisive word-play is so often bound up with the people and



events of the moment that it may have little significance for a later generation. Henry James I remember chiefly by the shock he received on learning our rate of pay. His characteristic tribute to his friend Charles Eliot Norton certainly deserved a more substantial reward than we could afford to give him for it. But the very finest of all these contributions, in my opinion, is the prose elegy by Ricketts on the death of Conder, published in April 1909. No one could have rendered more exquisitely the spirit of Conder's enchanting, fragile decorations, 'the sense of wit and romance which they evoke, the sense of luxury which they express, and the love for beautiful things which pass away, like laughter and music, the mirage of noon, the magic of the night, the perfume of flowers and youth and life.'

The bust of *Flora*, afterwards so famous, swam into my ken quite innocently in a South Kensington flat. I could not for one moment accept Leonardo's authorship, as the owner, Mr. Murray Marks, would have liked me to do. Not only was the wax, at that time, most unconvincing in colour and texture, being wholly different from such cinquecento waxes as I had examined, but the front view was much heavier than Leonardo's virginal faces, the hair on one side descended in curls that were oddly Victorian. But we happened at the moment to be publishing an article upon the various 'Flora' pictures produced by Leonardo's Milanese following, so that the bust, being clearly connected in some way with these Milanese derivatives, merited publication among them. I therefore got photographs from the owner, mentioning the bust in a short appendix to the article, in words which I judged to be innocuous, both to the owner's claims and to the reputation of the magazine for common sense, and then forgot the whole business.

The news that Bode had bought the *Flora* for Berlin, as a genuine work by Leonardo, came like a thunderbolt, and I was dismayed to find, when re-reading my hasty note upon the bust, that I had been rather too clever. What I had intended for polite scepticism might easily be mistaken for

a confession of faith. The finding of a photograph of the bust, taken long before in the studio of Richard Cockle Lucas, and of the Leonardesque picture in the Morrison Collection with which it was connected; the solemn 'probing of the statue' at Berlin, and the extraction of 'die Veste' from its interior, had long been things of the past when I found myself, between Bode and Friedländer, right up against the *Flora* once more, on a specially conducted tour round the Kaiser-Friedrichs-Museum. In her neat glass case she was almost unrecognizable. Her complexion was all that an artist could desire, her features had grown refined, her curls had now a permanent wave that was almost Hellenic. She had in fact become a thing of unquestionable beauty, and there was no need to drag in Leonardo's name when saying so.

The decision and foresight displayed by the Berlin Museum at this time made a striking contrast to the haphazard ways of the National Gallery. Two incidents in 1909 confirmed this difference. The first had its comic aspect. Going round Willis's Rooms one day, rather hurriedly, I noticed a little painting, so capable, and so close to Rembrandt, that I marked it in my catalogue. At the door I met my friend Arthur Clifton, the head of the Carfax business, who asked me in his rather languid way whether there was anything worth looking at. 'You should get number so and so' was the reply. Clifton entered, looked at the picture, did not care for it, but, having regard for my advice, sent the faithful Jack Stepney to bid for it up to nine guineas. At nine guineas and a half it was secured by Messrs. Richardson, found to be signed and dated 1627, and therefore one of the earliest known works by Rembrandt. Without dreaming of giving Trafalgar Square the first refusal of their treasure, its new owners carried it off straight to Berlin, where I believe they got some £1500 for it.

And one could not blame them. On two occasions, at least, we had got owners to offer particularly beautiful and desirable works to the Nation, only to have them 'turned

down' without so much as a 'Thank you.' It was an open secret also that the Trustees had just agreed to buy for £7000 a 'Filippo Lippi,' when it proved to be a modern forgery, of such dubious value that the owner never took the trouble to reclaim it. Even those who disapproved most strongly of Mr. de Rothschild's obstructive ways could not deny that on this occasion he did the Gallery a real service.

The strangling of National Gallery initiative seemed to us to have begun with the famous Minute of Lord Rosebery, inspired, it is said, by Mr. Alfred de Rothschild's differences with Sir Frederick Burton, who in his last years had become something of an autocrat. By this Minute the Director's powers were made so dependent upon the opinion of the Board for the time being, that no definite policy of purchase, or for arresting the unhappy exodus of works of art from England, could either be formulated or maintained. We had lost all faith in Governments; 'Lord Rosebery made the bad beginning, Lord Salisbury and Mr. Balfour blessed it with the approval of inaction; things have been reduced to a farce by Mr. Asquith.' And when we had done a little to rouse public feeling, we could not rely upon that feeling being directed by common sense. For example, it was solemnly suggested that the best remedy would be a Register of all the important works of art in private possession, in serene forgetfulness of the fact that such a Register, without any provision for protecting its contents, would be a godsend to exporters. We had to conclude that 'the best safeguard for our national Philistinism is our national ignorance.' It is only fair to add that Fry in New York, under a different constitution, was also meeting with serious difficulties, from Trustees as anxious to retain good pictures for themselves as ours apparently were to see them sold, of course for the highest obtainable price, to other countries.

The sensation caused by the case of the famous 'Norfolk' Holbein, *Christina, Duchess of Milan*, reinforced this criticism of current methods. The saving of the picture for England, literally at the very last moment, by a magnificent anony-

mous gift from a lady, a large part, I believe, of her entire fortune, was a piece of luck which the Nation was not likely to experience a second time. So once more we pressed for the adoption of a definite public policy,—the provision of a lump sum sufficient to safeguard a few of the supremely important pictures in private possession,—completely forgetting that the owners of such pictures were not likely to welcome any restriction whatever upon their freedom to sell. I learned this later, to my cost. At the moment the feelings of a few great persons did not seem to matter compared with the national interest.

The reorganization of South Kensington Museum, on the lines (doubtless logical, but rather inhuman) laid down by the Committee of Inquiry and the Board of Education, was another question of the moment. It seemed as if a great opportunity for the aesthetic selection and presentation of exhibits was being missed, and a great architectural opportunity too. However, as we noticed at the time, the new building being erected in the midst of the Natural History Museum, the Imperial Institute, the Albert Memorial and Harrod's Stores, had the merit of being in harmony with them all.

The aim of these long-forgotten criticisms was wholly impersonal and constructive. Only by a steady refrain of sensible comment did it seem possible to attract the public attention, and to stir it to practical activity. And in time this came about. Aided by the more constant and authoritative pronouncements of Claude Phillips, usually echoed by the rest of the Press, a general feeling grew up that something really ought to be done. The feeling reached even to Whitehall and Downing Street, and suggested lines of policy to those working with the National Art-Collections Fund. A double-edged compliment from MacColl, an acknowledged master of critical tactics, gave us some amusement. 'You have arrived at a pitch of art in conveying the impression of a non-existent public demand as a solid and dangerous force, that must be the envy of lesser practitioners.'

By the summer of 1909 the 'Burlington' was actually paying its expenses. We were no longer dependents, and were ready, if necessary, to tilt against all the windmills in the world, when I was unexpectedly called away from Editorship to a very different field of action. Before I can come to that, certain other experiences must be mentioned.

CHAPTER XIV  
THE SLADE PROFESSORSHIP  
(1904-1910)

Slade Professor at Oxford and member of the New English Art Club; Sargent; Sickert; the International Society; pictures and lectures; my Oxford audience; honorary degrees; the Ashmolean Museum; disputes and discoveries; Lord Curzon and Mr. Balfour; Naples, Rome and Florence; painting at Ladbroke Grove; Littlehampton; experiments in water-colour and oils; the house flooded; entertainments; my wife's music.

MACCOLL's appointment to Millbank was recognized by all of us as being no more than his bare deserts. A little earlier I had received an appointment which could not be so described. In April 1904, my friend Dr. Butler of Brasenose told me that the Slade Chair would be vacant in July, and that a new Professor would be elected in the October term. 'If you don't stand, you might bring the thing to the notice of the right people.' Binyon naturally occurred to me. But he hesitated, owing to his museum work and his poetry. 'I've no doubt I could do it: but I have to think of my poetry, which (rightly or wrongly) comes first in my scheme of life. Were it not for this I should have no hesitation. I should enjoy the work very much, and I am proud that they should want me to try.' Fry (by rumour), Lionel Cust, T. G. Jackson, R.A., and Baldwin Brown, were other potential candidates, but all held back from unwillingness to oppose the existing Professor, H. E. Wooldridge, who hoped for re-election, with no prospect of it. The field thus remained fairly open, and in the autumn, since no friend of mine was standing, I sent in my name. Maunde Thompson, Sidney Colvin and Vernon Rendall provided testimonials, Rendall's being a little masterpiece. Butler, knowing his fellow-electors, advised me to offer eighteen lectures

instead of the statutory twelve, and to undertake to reside in Oxford during Term-time. The former was easy; the latter neither appealed to my wife nor suited my 'Burlington' work, so was met by compromise. Thanks to Butler's good counsel and indefatigable backing, I was elected on November 30th 1904.

In the January following, I had the additional honour of being elected, with Sargent, to membership of the New English Art Club. Sargent I never really knew. His world was almost as far above mine as were his unusual gifts of hand and eye, and he showed, I thought, to the greatest advantage on the one occasion when, in the cause of friendship, he exposed his disabilities. Having taken the chair at a dinner given to Steer, it was Sargent's duty to make a speech. He rose, blushing and stuttering, amid loud cheers. There was a long pause, and at last he got out the word 'Gentlemen.' Another long pause, more blushing and more cheering. 'I wish,' another long embarrassed pause, 'to convey to Steer—' Here Sargent stuck, going nearly black in the face, while all continued to applaud. At last, almost bursting with the colossal effort, he rapped out, '—this token of my inarticulate admiration,' and sat down. The most eloquent of orators could not have paid so convincing a tribute.

Later in the evening there was a general cry for Walter Sickert. That whimsical genius, who had at one time acted with Irving, got up from his chair and promptly gave us part of 'Hamlet,' Act I, Scene II, as it might be performed by a travelling company. Assuming, like Brandram, the various parts in turn, he rendered them with a satire as delightful as the older man's convincing truth. His Queen, a pathetic creature, slightly uncertain about her aspirates, made a perfect foil to the ranting King, who marched her off with ludicrous pomp when, with 'the cannon to the clou-ouds,' he reached his exit and his top-note.

One of the most sumptuous dinners of the period was given at the New Gallery by the International Society of

Painters, Sculptors and Engravers, in honour of their President, Rodin. The great sculptor, by the way, with his long beard and aquiline nose, looked as if he might have been a peasant half-brother to Leopold, King of the Belgians. Placed between Shannon and Hugh Lane, ever lively and adroit, I enjoyed myself thoroughly, but the splendour of the entertainment, in striking contrast to the tweed-suit habits of the New English Art Club, and of 'Independent' painters in general, may have diverted others besides myself. When Prince Troubetskoi returned thanks for 'The Guests' in an admirable speech, one sentence of it, which was greeted with loud applause, stuck pleasantly in my memory: 'I came over to London this evening expecting to find myself in a company of artists: I find myself in a company of gentlemen.' The portrait-painter, of course, has to play up to his public with these social displays. But how Whistler, the Society's first President, would have crackled and chuckled over that distinction!

Shannon and Ricketts wished me to join them in the International. The New English, however, was good enough for me. Gratitude and admiration alike inspired loyalty. The Club had accepted my first obscure exhibits; its tiny funds were handled with such wise economy that it was always on the brink of a crisis yet never in debt; sturdy, smiling Francis Bate ruled its affairs and its members like a tactful dictator; its constitution was that rare thing, a practical democracy,—a proof that such a form of government can work, where the citizens are all approximately equal and all intelligent.

Over my exhibits I will pass as quickly as I can; most of them were painted from my sketches in Switzerland. *The Myten* (November 1903), an oblong essay in blue, was ultimately bought by Charles Rothenstein, after an apprenticeship in Carfax's Ryder Street window. *The Portsmouth Road*, already mentioned, was shown in May 1904, and with it a *Meiringen*, since destroyed. *The Schreckhorn and Finsteraarhorn* (November 1904) was one of my favourites; Ricketts also liked it, but it found no purchaser. In 1905 the demolition



of the Egyptian Hall left the New English without a home. The little Dudley Gallery had served them well, and the substitutes were but makeshifts in comparison; at least neither the Royal Institution, Liverpool, to which I sent four pictures, nor the Alpine Club Gallery, to which I sent two, produced any sales.

The Alpine Club pair represented scenes on the Gower Coast and at Bude, from sketches made in 1904 and 1905. On our visit to Bude in August 1905, we were accompanied by our elder son Martin, born the preceding May. Bude in my childhood had seemed a pleasant appendage to my father's parish of Stratton. Stratton was now the appendage; its fine church being a show-place for tourists from fashionable Bude. When we were not paying visits, we fished for dace in the rather picturesque canal, a sport at which my wife became an adept, and I tried to catch bass at the end of the breakwater. The too rare excitement of playing a fish in the breakers, and landing him somehow among the slippery rocks, was enough to atone for many blank days. If the bass generally disappointed, certain mullet invariably maddened. A shoal, big and apparently unsuspicious, was always cruising over a pool in the little estuary, gobbling at an invisible something, yet always disdain the tiniest of baits and trout flies. In despair, I got up very early one morning. Sure enough there came a bite and a strong fish on the hook which ultimately revealed himself as a thick, dark two-pound eel. No mullet was ever deceived.

My Oxford Professorship, so materially convenient in view of the increase in my family, filled me with terror as the time drew near for delivering the Inaugural Address. I had never given a lecture, and since my undergraduate days had never heard one. So when, at last, I was marched in state between the Principal of Brasenose and Dr. Butler to the scene of my trial, I quaked like a fraudulent criminal on the point of being found out. My fears came to a head when I found myself alone on a platform (I have clean for-

gotten what the building was), facing, as in an evil dream, an immense hemi-cycle of University dignitaries, gowned and solemn Inquisitors, all with their eyes upon me. *Vox faucibus haesit*. I could pump up no more than a tremulous whisper, and in that started reading to them my 'Practical Work as an Aid to the Study of the Fine Arts,' every dull sentence driving another nail into my coffin of shame. The thing did contain a few poor grains of sense, but they were buried under such slabs of pretentious commonplace, and were anyhow so little calculated to please an audience already pleased with itself, that the faint formal applause when I stopped, and the atmosphere of failure in which we trudged back to Brasenose, talking most carefully of other matters, seemed quite appropriate.

My aim was to induce people to scrutinize actual works of art, by collecting them, handling them, or trying to produce them, instead of merely reading art-books and theorizing at second-hand. I began with a series of simple lectures on sculpture, and was the better satisfied with my little flock of some fifty 'regulars,' when I happened to take down a volume of Ruskin from Sotheran's shelves, and opened upon a letter in which he confessed that, for all his reputed influence, his nucleus of attentive hearers was no larger than mine.

In the summer term of 1905, a series of lectures on 'Colour' started the inquiry which resulted in 'Notes on the Science of Picture-Making' (1909). The book was very kindly received, and was dedicated to the four friends, Ricketts, Binyon, Fry and Dr. Butler, who by introducing me successively to Painting, to Writing, to the 'Burlington Magazine,' and to the Slade Professorship, had given me my chance in life. Rembrandt's Etchings, my next subject, suggested thoughts on the best way of training an artist. After appearing in the 'Burlington,' these lectures also were worked up into a book, a rather unsuccessful one this time, 'Notes on the Art of Rembrandt.' For this, as for an invalid child, I have a peculiar affection.

What secret strings connect the brain with the tongue? Why does a man speak on one occasion with force and fluency, while on another, equally well prepared for, he becomes a stammering dullard? Fatigue is not fatal, any more than alcohol is an unfailing remedy. Once, after three exasperating hours at one of the interminable meetings at the Ashmolean, I had to leave the others still disputing, and go straight up, thoroughly tired out, to deliver a lecture for a fourth hour. To my surprise, and still more, no doubt, to that of my Slade audience, I found myself speaking with an ease and vigour which I never again attained but once (and that was after a civic luncheon!), every sentence coming out, pat and grammatical, without the least conscious effort. Perhaps because they are sub-conscious, such moods are easily interrupted. For example, while enlisting support for the 'Rokeby Velazquez,' I found my eloquence received with perplexity, followed by such broad grins on the up-turned faces below me that I had to look back at the screen. My nice new slide of the picture, specially made for the occasion, was shrivelling up in the heat of the lantern, and Venus had become anything but an object of desire. The thread of my speech was destroyed at the same time; I could only laugh and stop talking.

Among the seniors in my audience, our old family friend, Dr. James, the President of St. John's, with Mrs. Daniel and Mrs. Farnell, are those I remember best. Among my undergraduate acquaintances, Paul Methuen and R. M. Gleadowe had the greatest natural talent for drawing; W. Ormsby-Gore, afterwards to be a Seraph Abdiel at Trafalgar Square, was the leader of a group of keen students from New College, including Geoffrey Whitworth, A. K. Cook and A. B. Lloyd-Baker; R. H. Wilenski of Balliol, then as now, took a line of his own.

Had not politics claimed him, Ormsby-Gore would have made his mark in the art world. Already he had travelled much, seen much, and remembered much. As quick to assimilate as to admire, his knowledge and intelligence were

considerably above even our modern museum-entrance standard. When he took up Art as a special subject for 'Greats'—he was the first undergraduate, I believe, to do so—he was awarded only a second class, to my very great surprise. Only years later did I learn the reason. To save the cost of a special examiner for a single candidate, the University entrusted the business to one of its most learned and distinguished members. That conscientious scholar, when reading up the subject, happened to light upon Bode's Leonardo-Verrocchio heresy, and took it for gospel. Ormsby-Gore, in consequence, was judged to be incorrect for giving the orthodox view of a period which, as I knew, he had studied with particular attention. He was also the first person whom I met possessing the courage and independence to admire the Baroque. Overwhelmed by the Tiepolo decorations at Würzburg, he contemplated a work upon that artist in which he might have anticipated some, at least, of the ideas with which Wölfflin has since made us familiar.

At first, being still a Brasenose undergraduate, I lectured gownless; but from the end of 1907, when the Degree of Hon. M.A. was conferred on me, I could don academic costume. A. D. Godley, the Public Orator, presented me for the Degree. Talking with him after the ceremony, I happened to ask if there was anything to pay. 'The University has sunk low,' was the reply, 'but it has not yet sunk to charging for Honorary Degrees.' He was optimistic. A few days later the Registrar politely requested £17, explaining that even the Kaiser, much to his surprise and indignation, had been charged for his Doctorate. I paid up more meekly, but the protests made by others on the occasion led, I believe, to the charge being abandoned.

Some time later I tried very hard to get the University to honour Mr. W. H. James Weale, whose great learning and independence of character had earned international respect. Fate owed him some recompense. Too honest evidence, given before the Committee of Inquiry into the administra-

tion of South Kensington Museum, had led to his dismissal by the authorities from the Library which he had developed into the finest thing of its kind. Thrown upon the world, he had made a name known to all Europe as the pioneer of research in Early Flemish Painting. Now he was old, poor and nearly blind. But the Vice-Chancellor was dubious. Honorary Degrees 'were for men of higher station.' I thought that Oxford might occasionally recognize learning. A London museum authority was consulted, who (Heaven forgive him!) described Mr. Weale as 'merely a crabbed old scholar.' 'Well, you see!' . . . was the Vice-Chancellor's attitude when he showed me the letter. I had expected better things of them both, and fear that I said so. It was the single favour I had asked during my double term of office, and my soreness only subsided at the sight of the caricature by 'Max,' of Lord Curzon conferring Honorary Degrees upon a delightfully mixed group of popular favourites, including Little Tich.

Brasenose, though its interests were not generally associated with the Fine Arts, had given me the welcome of the returned Prodigal. For A. J. Jenkinson, with whom I breakfasted every week, I quickly conceived a warm affection. His sincerity, his power of grasping the essentials of everything from profound philosophy to University finance, his cautious good sense and quiet humour, rendered him stimulating company, and were obtaining for him a high place among Oxford statesmen, when all was ended by a climbing accident.

The Ashmolean Museum, under Dr. Arthur Evans, had been transformed from an enchanting junk shop into a most important and up-to-date institution. That masterful archaeologist, its second founder, naturally anxious to establish it firmly, and unable to get either the space he required, or any adequate grant, from an impoverished University Chest, sought to effect some part of his purpose by an amalgamation with the University Picture Galleries. His plan, no less naturally, failed to appeal either to the

Visitors of the Galleries, the body which had long controlled the best part of the Taylorian building, or to me when, as an appendix, the making of the Slade Professorship into a permanency, coupled with keepership of the Picture Galleries, was included. Being convinced, against my own immediate interest and the claims of gratitude, that permanency in Art Professorships was a thoroughly bad thing, leading always to sterility in the Professor and to indifference in his hearers, I had to resist the proposal, to displease some of my best friends, and, incidentally, to be called a liar at one of the critical meetings. That was not the last of these academic amenities. At a subsequent meeting I felt bound to vote in favour of another section of Dr. Evans's proposals, and, as I left, a furious member of what had previously been my own party hissed in my ear, 'You have betrayed Ruskin.'

I was consulted, about the same time, as to what could be done to save the damaged Pre-Raphaelite paintings in the Library of the Oxford Union Society. Their condition seemed to me desperate, and beyond aid from any process of restoration which was then available. Now, it is hoped that the skill and experience of Professor Tristram will be able to repair, at least in part, the fading and disintegration due to the insufficiency of the original ground. At the time I could only suggest the making of a record by photography. This was most ably done by Mr. W. E. Gray, and the results published by the University Press, with an account of the paintings by Holman Hunt. When I looked up the book just now, I found that a Press cutting had slipped into it, a column of rebuke to me, in an evening paper of 1908, for having written to the 'Times' in favour of tolerance for Epstein's statues on the British Medical Building. It was an odd coincidence, since Epstein's statues and the Union paintings are at this very time (May 1935) once more occupying public attention together.

The University Galleries, then, were pleasant, but very much smaller than they are now. Having no special room for receiving undergraduates, when they came for advice or

informal teaching, I prowled about as chance led me. One day I discovered a tiny lumber-room, and rummaging there, on the floor, among the dusty cast-offs, I lighted upon quite a little group of panels by Van Dyck and Rubens, and a picture by Wilson, all of which were duly placed on exhibition. It was pleasant to be in a place where such finds might still be made.

Another day I happened to be with Sidney Colvin, as he was going through the last batch of drawings for his great publication on the collections at Oxford. Under them lay a huge brown-paper parcel of things rejected by everyone. Colvin did not want it, so I untied the string and turned over the scraps. The majority deserved their fate: but the finding of one interesting cartoon encouraged me to persevere. Suddenly there came to light a ferocious *Head of a Warrior*, which almost took my breath away. The head was plainly that of the central figure in *The Battle of Anghiari* by Leonardo da Vinci; moreover, though considerably retouched, it was from the master's own hand. Colvin at first pooh-poohed it, being more than doubtful of its authenticity, but by the time he published it, the drawing was recognized as being, probably, the single fragment of Leonardo's famous cartoon that has survived contemporary admiration.

Lord Curzon's appointment to the Chancellorship provided Oxford with several mild excitements and one or two stately dinners. Mr. Arthur Balfour also came down for a day to deliver his Romanes lecture on 'Criticism and Beauty' in the Sheldonian. I listened with growing bewilderment, till my neighbour, Jenkinson, whispered 'This is all straight out of your book' (*The Science of Picture-Making*). Lunch in Magdalen was to follow. On the way thither Lord Curzon passed me, as was perhaps natural at such a time, without a sign of recognition. When I came into Magdalen Hall, the President advanced from the group of great ones standing by the fireplace, to tell me that Mr. Balfour wished to make my acquaintance. 'You will know,' said Mr. Balfour, on my introduction, 'where most of that lecture came

from.' Then Lord Curzon, seeing us laughing and talking together, bore down beaming, with hand outstretched, greeting me by name as if I was an old and valued friend. Mr. Balfour afterwards sent me a copy of his lecture; it had been almost entirely rewritten.

He seemed to prefer raising difficulties to finding, or approving, any practical solution for them. Were it not for that Irish Secretaryship one might think of him, with all his intellect and charm of manner, as an ineffectual angel. Did the energy and courage which he then displayed exhaust prematurely such capacity for action as he possessed? There must have been some strain of weakness in him, or he could not, when John's name was proposed to him for painting his portrait, have hesitated between that master, then at the climax of his early power, and Lady Granby.

At the end of 1907 I was unanimously re-elected Professor for a further term of three years, in accordance with the general custom, Lionel Cust being, I believe, the only rival candidate. The latter part of my time was chiefly occupied by a series of lectures on Raphael, as illustrated by the wonderful group of his drawings in the University Galleries. I had hoped to follow them by a similar series on Michelangelo, but had only time for an introductory lecture on that artist before other interests claimed me. Michelangelo proved, however, so popular a subject, that my lecture-room and all the space outside was crammed, until people had to be turned away from the entrance-door;—an experience as unexpected as unique.

My last series dealt with 'Heredity in Royal Portraits,' to me, at least, a fascinating sidelight on Mendelism. The lectures were afterwards repeated at the Royal Institution. It was proving, however, more and more difficult to reconcile my duties as Professor with the claims of the work I was now undertaking at the National Portrait Gallery, so I decided to retire before the end of my second term of office. It was, perhaps, well that I did so, for at the moment I must have said all that I could say with any freshness. Indeed, when



delivering my valedictory lecture I nearly fell asleep on the platform. Waking myself with an effort, I wound up somehow, twenty-five minutes before the customary closing-time.

While planning the lectures on Raphael and Michelangelo, it was necessary to see Italy once more. Thither accordingly I went in April 1906; first to stately Turin, and thence by Genoa southwards. The fever-haunted Tuscan Maremma with its bays and capes, and names like Talamone recalling its early Greek invaders, looked enchanting in the morning sunshine; then came the grassy swells and ruined aqueducts of the Campagna and the dome of S. Peter's beyond them. The Vatican far exceeded expectation. Nothing had prepared me for the superb colour of the Sistine ceiling—as unique in its calculated, stimulating restraint as the godlike forms with which it is allied. Nothing had prepared me for the vigour and variety of Raphael, conquering one immense field of design after another. It was long before I could reconcile the noble decorator of the Stanze with the painter of over-sweet Madonnas and sentimental saints, nor did the reconciliation, if I may judge by the present sales of my little book on Raphael, satisfy many people except myself.

From these great impressions, and from the Forum, then but partially excavated by Boni, I had to tear myself in order to fit in a visit to Naples. The mountains of the Abruzzi, storm-swept and snow-flecked, great ruined castles by the wayside, and a meal with the most delicious Orvieto wine, unobtainable, alas! in England, passed the time delightfully until the great pointed cone of Vesuvius appeared. Suddenly one little puff of black smoke sailed up from the summit, exciting the group of gold-braided officers in the carriage with me. Such things prefaced an eruption. That night the cone was marked by a dull red smear, high up in the sky. Next morning I woke in a drift of gray volcanic dust. Looking from above over the long city and the curve of the bay, one could see the mountain as a vast gray silhouette, from which huge volumes of dark smoke were pumping up, impelled by a pressure so obviously terrific as

to suggest the possibility at any moment of some catastrophic explosion. Far above the mountain the smoke spread out into a great canopy, and in the shadow of that canopy I set about seeing the sights;—the famous Aquarium with its harsh, much-vaunted decorations by Hans von Marées, the untidy Picture Gallery with its fine, desiccated Titians, its wonderful Brueghel, and, above all, the Museum with its treasures of sculpture and decoration from Herculaneum. If the bust known as *Plato* showed what bronze could become in the hands of a consummate artist, the beauty of ordinary Greco-Roman furniture and household utensils proved that the first century was not inferior to the eighteenth in craftsmanship and the amenities of life.

Can the printing-press, the one great invention unknown to Imperial Rome, save us from a collapse like hers? Or is it merely a culture-medium and carrier for the germs of corruption? Even its appeal to man's reason provides him, through science, with new means of self-annihilation: its appeal to his vanities and passions makes that end not infrequently seem the best thing for all concerned. But why this moralizing? It's a case of *mentem et mortalia tangunt*, I suppose. When, as an undergraduate, I was wandering with Cripps about the old Ashmolean Museum, Pater happened to come up to us with Dr. Bussell. I had been amused by a Roman child's toy, a bird on wheels, and ventured to say so. 'These things always make *me* rather sad,' answered Pater, and moved on.

The other sights of Naples included a magnificent spectacle of the cloud-capped volcano, seen across the Bay from Posilipo, and aflame with sunset fires. Turner doubtless would have transformed such a subject into a pictorial harmony: my repeated attempts were quite horrible. It was now time for Pompeii. But I had delayed too long in Naples; the railway was damaged, and Pompeii had become forbidden ground. Only Avernus and the Bay of Baiae remained.

Under the canopy of ashes, a strong wind made Naples so

cold that a top-coat was a comfort. As the train drew towards Baia, I copied my fellow-travellers by emptying out of my boots the gray dust which had penetrated into them, as into all one's other belongings. Brown or, more often, bright yellow boots, with a dark suit, top-coat, and black bowler, were the local fashion; by imitating it I passed unchallenged through the cloud of mendicants, touts, 'guides' and parasites which buzzed round the station exit at Baia to settle upon the tourists. Here we were outside the shadow of the eruption; the thunderous grays and blues of Vesuvius were far behind us; the slopes towards the bay with their ancient overgrown ruins, immortalized by Wilson and Turner, looked enchanting in the pallid sunshine. As I marched along towards Cumae, sketching, the sun grew hotter and hotter, and long before I reached Avernus on my way back I regretted my top-coat, and looked about in vain for some conveyance. Avernus with its vineyards, its neat stone coping and clear brown water, dimpled apparently by small fish, was anything but the deadly lake of tradition, though its cliff rampart was noble enough. Hot and foot-sore, I skipped the Solfatara, making for Posilipo and the nearest tavern to order half a litre of red wine. 'Una cinquanta,' said the smiling padrona as she passed me the glass. I smiled, shook my head, went out, and was well into the road before there came a rush behind me and 'Venticinque, Signor.' Sitting over my wine, I could contemplate at Lucretian ease three very nicely dressed English tourists, being followed, each to his furious embarrassment, by a regular *queue* of pressing, gabbling mendicants, and thank God for my brown boots.

The next morning broke in a downpour of gray mud—ashes mixed with rain—which darkened the sky and left a thick deposit on every person and every window-pane. There was nothing for it but to get back to Rome, where my friend Cripps was to join me. Outside Naples, the uppermost curve of Vesuvius still showed faintly through the Dantesque murk for a few moments; then it was over—

whelmed, remaining invisible, I was told, for about a fortnight. During that time mud and ashes rained upon Naples till the deposit, some two feet thick, brought down the roof of the market upon its unlucky inmates. When Vesuvius was seen again, the ridge of Monte Somma had become the summit. The former cone, six hundred feet high, had all been blown away.

Cripps and I set to work on Roman antiquities, not, of course, forgetting the pictures. When the main part of the day's work was done, I made sketches on the Palatine and elsewhere, though none of these proved as useful as the Neapolitan studies made under more exciting conditions. Others may be able to dispense with external stimuli to the pictorial imagination, or to create substitutes for it in the modern fashion. My old-fashioned engine has no self-starter, and will only fire when it is wound up very sharply. Suddenly I became unwell, more probably from overwork than from the Roman climate, which I suspected at the time. Shannon had had a similar experience there six weeks earlier, when Ricketts wrote, 'I tried to poison him with strychnine, I gave him 8 times his proper dose.'

We fled to the hill air of Arezzo to recoup, and to admire Piero della Francesca, amid dust and scaffolding, before going on to Florence. Florence, since our previous visit, had changed greatly. The Germans, now more numerous, more prosperous, and more open-handed than English visitors, had replaced them in popular favour. Barile's, starred in Baedeker, and redecorated to suit its new clients, had become cosmopolitan and commonplace. Even in our little Italian *locanda* we found a German art-student with whom, when his English and my German ran out, I discussed Florentine Art in Latin. Horne showed us over the bare, newly purchased Palace which was to become his Museum. Cripps's uncle, Colonel Young, produced the manuscript of his book on the Medici, and a most welcome shoulder of mutton at dinner. This afterwards earned for him a kindly review of the book; the single occasion on which I allowed

strict editorial justice to be mitigated by gratitude. Indeed I was so tired by work on Donatello, Verrocchio and Michelangelo, not to mention other Florentine worthies, that Italian food and wine had ceased to reinvigorate. That memorable joint made a new man of me for the time being. After revising and augmenting previous impressions at Bologna and Milan, we travelled home, meeting Ormsby-Gore *en route*. Night was falling when the train stopped outside Lucerne for a few minutes in a snowy wilderness, as desolate and impressive as a winter scene by Hokusai. *Red Ruin, Lucerne*, now in the Tate Gallery, was one of the indirect results.

That summer (1906) the New English held the first of several exhibitions in a little gallery tucked away among the larger buildings of Dering Yard. Three phases of the Vesuvius eruption figured there, and in the autumn I sent a *View on the Reuss, Lucerne*, not badly painted, but too low in tone for popularity. It had been sketched a few minutes before the *Red Ruin*, which picture, with several others, I brought to Dering Yard for the next exhibition in May 1907. Steer happened to be in the gallery as I entered with them, and on seeing the *Red Ruin* remarked, 'That must have been a pretty cold place. It makes me shiver to look at it.' Interpreting the words as a kindly criticism of the picture's tone, I waited till Steer had gone, chartered a cab and took the thing away. It was late on Saturday afternoon, and Fred Winter, our kind and experienced secretary, assured me that if I returned it quite early on Monday morning it would not be too late for the Selecting Jury. Retouching would do the picture no good; it was already too heavy. It would have to be copied.

My painting-room at 73 Ladbrooke Grove was a high front room on the ground floor, with a large window facing north-east. Never before or since did I work in a light so trustworthy. The little back-bedrooms wherein I usually paint, where the canvas has to be close to the window and to be lighted from the side, tend to flatter the painter, and the

tones need much revision before they can hold their own in any more direct and penetrating illumination. At Ladbroke Grove no such revision was needed. What was wrong looked wrong at once, so the work I did during our seven years' residence there was, I believe, more consistently respectable than at any other period of my life. Anyhow I found it easy enough on that Sunday morning (my only time for painting) to make a copy of the *Red Ruin*, the same size as the original, using turpentine as a medium to help quick drying. This copy went to Dering Yard, was subsequently chosen by Robbie Ross for the Contemporary Art Society and, under their patronage, passed into the Tate Gallery. My wife, with her customary insight, preferred and claimed the first version. This, when I see it at Appleby, appears to have acquired a weight, a substance and a grimness which the replica at Millbank does not possess.

Our summer holiday in 1906 was spent at Middleton, Teesdale, where the sight of High Force, the grandest of English waterfalls, and of the Bowes Museum, in its incomplete state the oddest thing of its kind, with some indifferent trout-fishing and an adventure with a salmon, were the only memorable events. The fish was landed on trout tackle, without a landing-net, but kicked himself out of my arms and back into the river when I tried to climb up the rocks with him. The next summer, when we took Martin and the newly arrived Robin to Littlehampton, had one unexpected result, connected neither with sight-seeing nor with sport. I went fishing, of course. Experience at Bude had taught me, I imagined, the ways of bass. So when I went down to the river for the first time, at the proper state of the tide, with the proper tackle and bait, I was not in the least surprised to hook and land a five-pounder within ten minutes of my arrival. Filled with confidence I went down again and again, but was never rewarded by another bite for five whole weeks. Then I did catch a small bass, but only while fishing (in vain, as usual) for mullet.

My solitary adventure during this barren time began with

the discovery of a conger eel in a pool at the end of the pier. There followed his hooking with an improvised gaff just as the tide rose round us both, his splashing *quietus* inflicted with a stretcher borrowed from a passing boat, and then, as *finale*, a laborious climb with him, other means of retreat being cut off by the rising tide, from the sea to the top of the pier head. As he weighed over six pounds he was no more agreeable as a burden than he was when subsequently cooked by our landlady.

If anglers as a class succeeded as rarely as I do, the Johnsonian repute of the craft would be well deserved. Personally I console myself with the belief that Providence mulcts me in fish and other sporting quarry, as a 'set off' against her generosity in things more important. When I have consistent bad luck in fishing, I console myself by thinking that good luck is coming elsewhere. Anyhow it is a comfortable faith for a duffer, and I have never looked up my fishing diaries to see what disasters have followed an occasional red-letter day by the waterside.

The sequel I connect with my Littlehampton failures is an odd one. The sheds and craft by the Arun provided plenty of sketching material that was picturesque, but had little of the 'importance' which I thought necessary for an oil-painting. On my return it occurred to me that drawings from some of my sketches might be saleable when pictures were not; but who was I to make any drawings up to the standard of the New English and its Slade School *virtuosi*? My natural preference was for a pen-and-wash method, corresponding more or less to the pencil-drawings I made from nature when they had been 'fixed' afterwards with water-colour. There, however, the way was barred by Muirhead Bone and others. Anything which I tried would only seem a feeble imitation of much better men.

Turning to the manuscript embryo of my 'Science of Picture-Making,' I sought for guidance there, as I still do sometimes. A series of experiments followed which lasted two or three months. After treating the same or similar

subjects with every variety of material and method, I came to a definite conclusion. Black chalk upon white paper could provide a firm foundation for almost any type of design. Washes of colour, if tactfully added, would not only clothe the nakedness of this beginning, but would themselves acquire a certain 'muted purity,' as a critic once put it, from the grains of chalk incorporated with them in the process. This chalk, presumably from containing much carbon, had a tendency, I found afterwards, to absorb a little of the more delicate colouring matter, so that some of my earlier drawings are now more skeletal than at their first appearance. I allowed for this tendency later by reinforcing the colour schemes.

The first products of all this labour were shown at Dowdeswell's in the winter of 1907, and at the New English in the spring of 1908. Naturally they were overwhelmed by the work of men like Steer and John, then near the summit of their power. Nor can I find that the drawings attracted particular notice when Carfax gave me my first 'one man show' in January 1909, although they numbered eighteen out of twenty-eight exhibits, and I sold several of them. One of the oil-paintings was the *Biasca*, now at Manchester; another, *The Power Station* (1907), was my first elaborate effort at an Industrial subject. A third picture, *High Cup Nick from Appleby*, had a queer technical history. Somebody persuaded me to try a new petroleum medium—warranted to be perfection—a German compound, I think. And perfection it was, so far as ease of execution went. *High Cup Nick* was begun and finished, with unusual brilliancy of effect, in a single Sunday morning. After lunch I strolled in to admire it, and found to my disgust that the masterpiece was already a network of small but steadily expanding cracks. There was nothing for it but to repaint the whole picture at once with linseed oil. The brightness was somewhat dulled, but the surface was sound, and remained so.

Linseed oil reminds me of another experience. *Rougemont*, an exhibit at the New English in the spring of 1908, was



painted from a landscape which appeared to me in a vivid dream, and which I contrived to memorize before waking. I happened at the time to be studying the tradition of the brothers Van Eyck, and wondered if their famous medium had not been simply good linseed oil. Having a smooth canvas, prepared with thick flake white, as a substitute for a fifteenth-century panel, I painted my dream-picture upon it with a small sable brush. Contrary to expectation, the method proved exceedingly rapid. It was quite easy to draw innumerable mountains, rocks, and fir-trees with the fine point; indeed I fancy that 'old' Brueghel may have used some such method, since the quality obtained had some resemblance to his. The picture dried with just the smooth glassy surface I had hoped for, and held its own quite respectably at the New English. After the show I put it aside to wait for varnishing. But when I pulled it out from a stack of such things a twelvemonth later, I found that the film of paint had remained comparatively soft; every little rub and scratch had penetrated to the white ground. In despair of mending the damages, I cleaned the whole picture off, and painted something else, I forget what, upon the canvas.

In spite of a rather formidable exterior, the house at 73 Ladbroke Grove, to which we moved in 1907 before the birth of my second son Robin, had some attractive features. The lofty hall, and the stairs, far too many for comfort and too steep at the turns for safety, were wonderfully light and spacious. The dining-room windows opened upon a broad terrace, and thence a flight of steps led down to a large garden, which the community allowed to run wild without becoming squalid. The prospect from the upper windows included the spires of Richmond and of Harrow; of the merits of the painting-room I have spoken already. We did not, of course, escape the usual domestic troubles. It was infuriating to be served with black coffee (and to drink it, alas!), after a slipshod Italian manservant had wiped the cups with paraffin. It was still more annoying to find myself

pushing and carrying a big, smiling, tipsy cook up four long flights of stairs, at the very hour when I ought to have been sitting in comfort at the dinner given in honour of Robbie Ross. Yet a pleasant memory of that staircase remains. Two furniture men had struggled in vain upon it with an oak wardrobe, which finally fell from them and knocked a big hole in the wall. Our young Swedish manservant, Erik, could contain himself no longer. He had the whole wardrobe hoisted on to his back and walked up with it easily and unaided. No wonder the soldiers of Charles XII carried all before them!

The most notable catastrophe occurred while we were staying at Cambridge with Professor and Mrs. Seward, for a lecture which I was to deliver. In the middle of it, I was aware of a telegram brought into the lecture-room and passed up to my wife. She turned white as she read it, but remained in her seat until I had managed to wind up my discourse. The message, 'House flooded children safe Elizabeth,' appeared quite incomprehensible. We hastened back anxiously to a dwelling which, standing high upon the very summit of a considerable hill, seemed safe from any flood that had not also involved the whole Thames valley.

What had really happened proved to be as simple as it was disgusting. A parlour-maid, never conspicuous for intelligence, had decided on the previous evening to take a bath. Adjourning to my dressing-room on the third floor, she turned on both the bath-taps, and went upstairs to get ready, shutting the door behind her. Then she entirely forgot her laudable purpose. The bath duly filled and overflowed. A little water got out under the door and ran down the stairs: the remainder formed a pool some two feet deep, which soaked through my big wardrobe cupboard (ruining, among other things, three new hats just sent on approval), as well as by the edges of the cork-carpet, and descended to the drawing-room, *via* the walls, the pictures and the book-cases. When these and the carpet were saturated, it accumulated between the floor joists. Thence, now com-

pletely befouled, it burst through into the dining-room, once more over books and pictures, stopping only when it reached the basement and found no further exit. Weeks passed before we could start repairing the damage; months passed before we got rid of the dampness and the smell. Most of my pictures had to be repaired and relined; many of the books never recovered at all.

Our principal festivity was an entertainment every Christmas for the children and their grandmother, for the old lady now could seldom get over from Richmond to see them. My wife invented the annual programme, the setting and the dresses, these last being made by our faithful Elizabeth Lowis, who had been my wife's maid before her marriage, and was now the children's Nannie. Robin began his appearances in public before he could walk, by climbing out of a chimney in the dress of a Teddy Bear, with antics which delighted his godfather Ricketts. The next year the pair figured as green elves in a play with their clever little Fräulein, who shortly afterwards was summarily claimed and carried off, not without some misgiving I fancy, by a tall, dark and imperious German fiancé.

The following New Year's Eve produced a more elaborate show, and was attended by a considerable gathering. The drawing-room was stripped and turned into a winter landscape, with frosted lights and a white floor set with small fir-trees, among which the boys and two little daughters of my friend Richard Saunderson danced to music composed by my wife. The effect of these graceful little white figures winding through the trees was quite enchanting. When the children had gone to bed, their seniors made the evening still more memorable for us by sundry pseudo-dramatic *tableaux*. Harold Child as Dr. Faustus was taken over his books by a most uncanny and convincing devil (Walter Sickert, I believe): from beneath the waves of a dust-sheet rose the brawny, hairy arm of Strang extending a tin Excalibur, to be seized by a learned historian, drawn in as a tottering King Arthur upon a child's wheeled trolley.

Then after supper we all turned out on to the terrace by the dining-room, to welcome the New Year 1909 under the stars.

In the summer of 1908 we were invited to King Edward's garden-party at Windsor, the first, I believe, of its kind, and much smaller than its successors of to-day. For us the experience was wholly novel and delightful, though it might have been rather trying, since of course we knew hardly anyone there, but for the protection of my aunt Lady Holmes. We then went north to Espland, a farm-house on the moors above Appleby. There the children ran wild during the summer months, for more than one season. Immediately under the range of the Pennines and surrounded by great sweeps of heather, Espland was a fine centre for walking and sketching, though the fare and accommodation were rough, too rough, I fear, for visitors accustomed to the luxuries of a 'cottage' in the Home Counties. Roman Fell, Murton Pike and the pyramid of Dufton were landmarks for the drifting clouds; High Cup Nick, the great gloomy gorge in the Pennines, was within walking distance; the Ghyll below the farm contained an agreeably grim thero-morphic crag, *The Monster on the Moor* of my Carfax show in 1909; altogether a wonderful range of material for pictures.

My wife's musical gifts naturally introduced me to far more people and performances connected with her art than I had ever encountered before. The majestic bulk, acute intellect and world-wide experience of her teacher August Wilhelmj impressed me most of all. When he took up a fiddle to play to us after dinner, the poor thing dwindled to a child's toy upon his colossal torso, yet as he bent over it smiling he produced a tone of such overwhelming grandeur that all other violin-playing I ever heard, Isaye and Joachim not excepted, seemed the product of some smaller instrument—fit to accompany the divine clarinet of a Mühlfeldt, but not in itself an organ or an orchestra. Not less remarkable than the power thus displayed was the impression of a

still greater power held in reserve, behind the perfect balance between feeling and knowledge which his rendering maintained. With all his musical dignity Wilhelmj was a festive soul, enjoying the good things and the good stories of this world, as did his brilliant wife. I remember at their house the Chevalier de Munck, who married Carlotta Patti, telling us of a visit to Milan, where they found the big looking-glass in their hotel suite with a hole smashed in the middle of it. 'I bet Adelina and Strakosch (her brother-in-law and musical director) have been here,' was Carlotta's remark. And so it proved to be. Adelina, in youth, was handy with a hair-brush.

Of my wife's own musical enterprises at that time I particularly remember three. The first was a very successful concert given at the Star and Garter, Richmond, in 1904, in aid of the Rochester Diocesan Society, of which my mother was then the indefatigable secretary. The following year was occupied far more seriously in arranging three historical Recitals at the Salle Erard, to illustrate the use of the violin in the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The last two were postponed, owing to illness, to the spring of 1906, and only a small audience attended the first Recital, in November 1905. But the works by Purcell and his forerunners, which were then given, threw so much light upon the evolution of violin music as to attract considerable notice in the Press, and much larger audiences for the subsequent 'periods.' Third, and most sumptuous, came a performance of my wife's own compositions in Shannon's big studio in Lansdowne Road, he and Ricketts allowing the whole place to be turned topsy-turvy, and doing everything for us with a princely disregard for their pockets and their convenience.

CHAPTER XV

THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY (i)

(1909-1911)

Lionel Cust retires; fishing at Hawes; my appointment; J. D. Milner; Lord Dillon; the Trustees; needs of the Gallery; a 'Burlington' dinner; T. W. Bacon; Ricketts *v.* Fry at Oxford; P. H. Lee-Warner; some curious portraits; poaching at Barnard Castle; the Post-Impressionist controversy; the New English Art Club at its best; books and personages; Rembrandt's *Mill*; Mr. Asquith.

IN the spring of 1909, Lionel Cust had so much trouble with his eyesight that he decided to retire from the Directorship of the National Portrait Gallery. In July he asked me to come and see him. I found him seated, as usual, at the end of the long table in the Gallery Board Room, with its big windows, tall glazed book-cases and cheerful fireplace, the very model of what a Director's room should be. Cust was wearing dark blue glasses, and seemed worried over the future of the Gallery. He wished to leave it in hands that he could trust. Having expressed my sympathy, I left, only to be summoned again two days later. He had hoped that what he had told me would have led me to apply for the vacancy. Such an idea had never entered my head. I was no specialist on English Portraiture, and could not possibly stand in the way of those who were. At the moment, too, my combined professorship and editorship brought in considerably more than the official salary, £500; others might not be so fortunate.

Cust then explained the real origin of his anxiety. Political or personal influence was being used in favour of certain unnamed candidates, ill-fitted in his opinion either to maintain the reputation of the Gallery or to satisfy the Trustees, who, being gentlemen of the Old School, set, and expected,

a high standard of manners and character. Could I but submit my name, that would make a political job very difficult, if not impossible. Two friends, C. F. Bell of the Ashmolean Museum, who had organized the notable exhibitions of Oxford portraits, and Binyon, who had long been working on the English drawings at the British Museum, were clearly much better men for the post; and I said so. 'Well,' replied Cust, 'say what you please about others, so long as you send in your own name to make things quite safe.' I wrote a few lines accordingly to the Treasury, saying that if both Bell and Binyon should decline the Directorship, I was willing to submit my own name, and then went off for our family holiday to Hawes in Yorkshire.

While prospecting there in the spring, I got an hour or two by the Yore. There were plenty of trout, but they seemed curiously difficult. At last with a tiny Black Midge I caught one half-pounder, and was lying flat on the shingle to seduce another, when two stout anglers came down the bank and saw my fish. 'How long have you been at it?' asked one. 'Nearly an hour and a half,' I replied with some shame. 'Well,' said my questioner, 'we've been here nearly a fortnight and have only taken two.' Nevertheless I managed to get a second fish, and thoroughly satisfied therewith, engaged lodgings for the summer.

It was raining when we arrived at the end of July, but the moment the rain stopped I went down for half-an-hour, to a place by the road which I had noted as good for spinning a minnow. Having caught a brace of nice fish, as expected, I went back to lunch, to be received almost with reverence by our hostesses. I did not understand their surprise until I had flogged that pleasant water for another three weeks, without catching a single trout. Then, after heavy rain, the sun came out one evening. All over the turbid stream the fish rose, and took Tup's Fancy without hesitation. But my casts must have been ruined by use in the preceding weeks of drought. Eight several fish did I hook only to be ignominiously broken, until all my Tups were gone, and the rise

was over. One fish, indeed, I got with the minnow, a week later, but that was the end of my luck. Blades the postman, the great local angler, told me that such caprice was no new thing. During the first fortnight of his own holiday he had caught only three fish; in the third week he caught over ninety.

If Hawes was no easy Paradise for the fisherman, it provided good material for the sketcher. I was reminded that the great Steer had honoured it with his patronage, by finding his side view immortalized upon a picture-postcard of Hardraw Force. The droop of the cigarette under the moustache was a hall-mark in itself. Steer saw the place in sunshine: I found wet weather more pictorial. The clouds beating up from the west clung almost every afternoon to the summit of the Pennines, and spread impressive shadows across the valley below. Every turn of the river, every stroll up the tributary streams, provided new foregrounds and new summits from Swaledale to Ribbleshead. One very strenuous day was devoted to Gordale Scar and Malham Cove, where I clambered and sketched and walked to weariness. But these stupendous natural features were too much for my limited art. I was no Turner or James Ward, and could make nothing of them.

My wife was much hindered in her movements by an attack of rheumatic fever, but she very pluckily scaled the Butter Tubs Pass, and on a memorable occasion went with me to Aysgarth Falls. I was riding a bicycle hired locally for sixpence, and tied up in places with string. Being unaccustomed to its free-wheel and other novelties, I began by running into a motor-car (fortunately it pulled up), and falling off amid shouts of laughter from all concerned. No other serious incident happened till we came to the long, steep descent into Aysgarth. There the string of the brake snapped, and I ran downhill headlong past my wife, and everything else, faster and faster, until below me appeared a sharp turning with a nasty stone wall against which I must soon be smashed. Looking in desperation at the high,



steep banks on each side of the road, I saw a path running abruptly up the bank to my left, and to it turned my furious wheels. By some miracle they climbed right up that narrow incline, and pitched me off at the top, quite gently, under a signpost inscribed 'To Aysgarth Falls.'

We were to leave Hawes on August 28th. On the morning of the 27th, a letter was handed to me marked 'Prime Minister.' It offered me the National Portrait Gallery Directorship. 'Mr. Asquith feels sure that the position will be one of great interest to you, and will give you much scope for your knowledge of art, and for those qualifications which he has heard from all sides that you possess for a post of this importance.' My superstition, that complete failure as a fisherman spelled success in other things, became thenceforward a faith. The surprise was complete,—for I had expected no result from my little note except the appointment of Bell or Binyon,—and still more complete to my relatives and friends, who naturally had no idea that I was even a candidate. But when in London I apologized for the curtness of my application, the answer was 'Not at all. If you care to see how *not* to apply for a post, here'—and a big bulging envelope was produced—'is the dossier of a candidate for another place, containing fifty-three letters of recommendation from persons of no importance.' Sundry conditions were named; I could not remain a Director of the 'Burlington'; I could not well remain its responsible editor; and since at first there would be much to do and to learn, I might find the work incompatible with an extended tenure of the Slade Professorship.

When the appointment was announced it was received surprisingly well. Everyone seemed to think I could manage the work: nobody stressed my ignorance of Portraits. What gratified me particularly was the almost universal wish that I should not give up the 'Burlington.' Our efforts to establish a sort of nucleus of practical sense in administration and of tolerance in criticism, had not, apparently, failed.

The letter which touched and troubled me most came from Robbie Ross. He, it appeared, had been among the candidates, and possibly one of the subjects of Cust's mysterious reference. He was a personal friend of the Prime Minister, yet his support of Oscar Wilde in the last unhappy years of his life, for which Ross was honoured by us all, might actually have created a prejudice against him in quarters where the very name of Wilde was still taboo. Anyhow, it was now too late to withdraw and, if we were fairly matched in our ignorance of National Portraits, Ross both in private means and in social attractiveness was much better equipped for facing the world.

Walter Sickert wrote under no such disadvantage. 'I now await with impatience and, I may say, not without some indignation, your shamefully-deferred appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury, Inspector of Nuisances to the L.C.C., and house-surgeon of St. Thomas's Hospital. I shall shortly offer you in your last capacity a portrait of George Jacob Holyoake. Also I wish to apply for your vacant chair at Oxford, if I am rightly informed that you are "leaving." If not I shall do nothing. *Soyez rassuré. Vous n'avez rien à craindre de yours* always Walter Sickert.' Oxford, however, expressed the wish that I should not resign abruptly, so I postponed action till the beginning of 1910.

Cust, in due course, introduced me to the Gallery, where I had to get through my first formal interview with my future assistant, J. D. Milner. Of course I had long known Milner as an invaluable helper when any iconographic problem had to be tackled; indeed this gentle, blushing pupil of Sir George Scharf was so vastly my superior, not only in the mechanics of Gallery administration but as a historical specialist, that I felt like an interloping carpet-bagger. Milner's modest tact did much to set me at my ease, for the moment; but I saw with dismay how unpleasantly hard I should have to work before I could hold my own with such an 'assistant.' Cust and others, I found, were not blind to Milner's ability, but thought him immature for promotion.

He had, it seemed, the further official disadvantage of having in youth, quite needlessly and heedlessly he told me, passed the Civil Service Examination for the Second Division, and the appointment of Second Division Clerks to Directorships was not, in those days, regarded with favour.

Then Lord Dillon, the Chairman of the Board, appeared, enchanting me at once by his magnificent figure and his merry Irish humour, while I quickly came to respect his fine consideration, his sound judgment, and his wide antiquarian experience. Sir George Scharf and Sir Augustus Franks had been his personal friends; he knew, liked and laughed at my uncle Richard Holmes, and he seemed to accept me at once as the sort of person needed to work with Milner, whose merits, in his opinion, had been rather kept in the background hitherto. And as I gradually got to know the other Trustees, it became evident that my lot was cast in a fair ground.

Lord Ronald Gower I might regard as an old acquaintance; Lord Knutsford made himself a personal friend, full of wisdom, reminiscences and zeal for the Gallery; Lord Cobham loved pictures as he loved cricket, Lord Ribblesdale as he loved horses,—good sportsmen both in the best sense of the word. Sir Coutts Lindsay was now too old, Lord (Edmond) Fitzmaurice in too indifferent health, to attend meetings often. Both, like Sir Edward Poynter (contrary to his reputation), made themselves invariably pleasant, as did Sir William Anson and Lord Balcarres, the Vice-Chairman. Sir Herbert Raphael was a brother fisherman; Professor Firth an old Oxford acquaintance; and Edmund Gosse, if a severe censor of literary reputations, was the reverse of censorious to me; introducing me to sundry interesting persons whom I should never otherwise have met. A little later my friend C. F. Bell from Oxford was added to this genial company, rather, I fear, to the disappointment of Cust, who had hoped to continue as Trustee the work he had done as Director.

The seven happiest years of my life were spent in working



LORD DILLON  
From a medal by Sidney Carline



J. D. MILNER



with and for this wonderful body of men. They met my difficulties, stupidities and occasional blunders with unruffled good-humour, tactfully endeavouring always to help and encourage, and making their individual suggestions with a deference for the Director's point of view that relieved him of any discomfort in expressing his own opinion frankly. Not one single dispute, during all those seven years, disturbed the atmosphere of friendship, confidence and laughter, in which the business of the Gallery was conducted. Much, no doubt, was due to Lord Dillon's own interest in every detail of the Gallery administration; still more to his tact, dignity and humour. Yet all his experience and influence might not have been enough to reconcile occasional differences of opinion, had not those who differed been themselves great gentlemen.

The first obvious duty was to start repairing my ignorance. My wife, having a fancy for the subject, had recently been presented by her father with the Cambridge Modern History. Through the umpteen volumes of that conscientious over-production I now plodded my way every evening. Every day I worked under Milner's eye upon the admirable reference collections which Scharf had founded. Royal Portraits came first, and the traits of heredity revealed by them provided me with material, as already mentioned, for a final course of lectures at Oxford. Then came portraits of eminent persons, whom the Gallery had not, so far, been able to represent. These likenesses had to be solemnly memorized, so that if lighted upon by chance they could be registered or secured. This effort permanently affected my visual memory. I did manage, at last, to fix in my mind the look and features of a large number of deceased Englishmen, but at the cost of failing to remember living persons;—a social disability for which the identification, occasionally, of some unknown portrait no longer compensates. After some three years, I could hold my own, even with Milner, so far as features were concerned: for minutiae of dress, and in particular for medals, orders, and other honorific dis-

tinctions, his eye and memory were beyond challenge. Only on points of technical quality, and the characteristic methods and touch of various portrait-painters, could I speak before him without some little apprehension.

Milner initiated me, too, into the mysteries of official correspondence:—how to understand a Treasury letter, and how to answer it. A Treasury letter, in those days at least, was as much a work of art as a paragraph in Tacitus; progressing from a stately introduction to an abstract of the matter in hand, so concise as to call for all the reader's wit and skill in precise interpretation, and ending with a tail which, as often as not, concealed a sting. Even a sanction or concession which appeared, at first sight, to be generous, would prove on close scrutiny to be hedged about with safeguards and qualifications such as only long experience in protecting the nation's small change could have devised, and only exceptional literary skill could have so compressed. To reply with anything like the same precision and finish was no easy task, but as Child had taught me how to write articles, so Milner now coached me in this more recondite craft;—it was really rather like composing a neat epigram. After a while the Trustees would jestingly say, 'It's a case for one of the Director's famous letters,' and leave me to hammer out my draft under Milner's eye. Milner's caution was a precious corrective to my native rashness. He would continually stop me from sending off letters written in the heat of the moment: the next morning we should see the words with a fresh eye. The Gallery was a tiny Department, of little account with its official overlords. If it was to get even a few of the things which it urgently needed, it could not afford mistakes.

These needs were many. The building in St. Martin's Place, a generous gift from Mr. W. H. Alexander, was singularly ill-adapted to its purpose. Even when first opened, it could barely house the portraits; as these increased in number year by year, the congestion became worse and worse. Plans and talk of extension, at some future date,

there might be; but nothing more. The potentialities of the Gallery as a vivid illustration of our national history had always appealed to me. This power for good was obscured, almost annihilated, by the very look of the place. If it was ever to become a real educational influence it would have to attract the public by its general appearance, its contents, and its publications. What were the facts?

The portraits, good and bad, important and unimportant, were crowded together in monotonous rows, according to size, against a shabby green wall-paper. The catalogue was equally crowded and uninviting. The floor was of rough bare boards. The gloomy entrance and cavernous stairways were obstacles which we should have to accept: the rest could be dealt with, in time. Time was evidently necessary. Highly artistic people affected contempt for the whole institution, saying that the best portraits ought to be transferred to the National Gallery where they could be properly seen, while the remainder might be kept on screens or in racks as a sort of reference library. This was MacColl's view; possibly, though I did not think of it then, that astute Director had an eye for the additions which would accrue to his collection at Millbank.

Heresies of this kind had to be endured in silence: the 'Burlington' was no longer available for combating them. Even my kindly and sympathetic Trustees felt, like great gentlemen of the Old School, that any popularizing of the Gallery was akin to self-advertisement. People of a scholarly habit would continue to come there; it was for them that the collection was made and maintained. Rearrangement, redecoration, they would heartily approve, but to court publicity in any overt shape was clearly premature. Even Lord Sudeley, long after, had to submit to the reputation of being an amiable crank, until he slowly wore down the prejudice against encouraging the public to use and appreciate their possessions.

Cust had tried to improve matters in his dignified way, through the medium of official correspondence. A pile of



letters nearly two inches thick testified to his zeal about floors and charwomen. But R. S. Meiklejohn at the Treasury had hinted that I might consult him personally if any difficulty cropped up: I ventured to try the same method with the Office of Works. Sir Schomberg MacDonnell at once agreed to shelve all ancient *dossiers* and make a fresh start, so that our floors, within a month or two, were being polished by Ronuk, instead of being laboriously scrubbed. No money for redecoration would be available before the following April, but rehanging by the Gallery staff cost nothing, so experiments could begin.

We had now the opportunity of practising what we had preached in the 'Burlington';—the proper exhibition of the best portraits, the relegation of the unimportant to ordered obscurity. Our first floor had a range of rooms that were badly lighted, so into them went the daubs, the dull divines (Cust rather fancied divines), and similar depressing canvases. Dead judges, doomed as a class to a like oblivion, had a limbo all to themselves on the ground floor. By this ruthless weeding of the collection, space could be found for showing all the chief portraits, in historical sequence and without overcrowding, in the galleries which had a good light. The result of the first trial surprised us by the number and quality of the good things which it revealed, and we looked forward eagerly to the time when the redecoration would be done, and the definite rearrangement possible.

Meanwhile a popular alternative to our informing but formidable catalogue was urgently needed. H.M. Stationery Office had not then learned to take pride in its publications; hence the only sort of Illustrated List which I could contrive, and extract from the unwilling Controller, did no credit to the printer's craft. If we had been allowed to go to an outside firm, we could have produced the scrubby thing for twopence-halfpenny, or thereabouts; but we had to take what we could get, or go without. Fortunately I found a practical and friendly helper in Mr. Codling, now

himself Controller, and by his good offices the Illustrated List duly appeared in 1910.

We were a little consoled for its insignificance by the fact that through an arrangement with Emery Walker, that tireless friend of the Arts, all the portraits in the Gallery had been photographed and prints of them made available for the public. Few museums or galleries, at that time, were so well served in this respect; and with such details of equipment settled, for the time being, we could turn without uneasiness to outside events. Callers and letters of inquiry were many, but Milner answered the difficult questions, while Bryant and Luxon, the chiefs of the attendant staff, were models of method, so that it was possible with their assistance to get through a fair amount of research work almost every day.

In October I received my first official recognition as a painter, when the Manchester Corporation bought my *Biasca* (1908) for sixty-five guineas, a recognition made doubly pleasant by coming from my native county, and from the city where, at the Jubilee Exhibition of 1887, I had first learned a little about British Art. My encouragement was increased through the purchase of a second picture, *The Garden Wall* (a compromise, if I remember rightly, between Daubigny and Wilson), by Mr. Alexander of Didsbury.

Then came the news of the connexion between the famous *Flora* bust and Richard Cockle Lucas. 'Nothing,' wrote a veteran English authority, 'for a long while has given me a purer joy. It will be an end for good and all of that arrogant art dictatorship from which we have all suffered so long. Is it too late for a note about it in the Mag?' On the other hand, Bode, whose help for the 'Burlington' in its early days I had happened to mention just previously in a speech, wrote: 'I thank you the more fervently, as I had to suffer just now from all the ridiculous attacks roused by the acquisition of the *Flora*. None of all the English art critics who claimed the bust for a work of the famous Lucas ever

saw the bust.' Personally I was sorry for Bode. Overbearing he undeniably was, but he had done an immense work for his country of which he might well be proud, and the outcry which his rivals now raised over this one error of judgment was less of a condemnation than a proof of his greatness. Luckily it was no longer my duty to keep the peace between these learned belligerents.

I had left the 'Burlington,' but it had not yet forgotten me, for on December 16th its patrons gave me a dinner at the Trocadero, which is one of the great memories of my life. Lord Plymouth, that firm friend to the Arts and to the Magazine, took the chair, and among the company I was specially pleased to see my uncle Richard Holmes and my father-in-law; the one for having fostered my boyish interest in art, the other for having faith in me when the rest of my folk had not. It was pleasant also to be able to give credit where credit was due:—to Fry for salving the Magazine and for raising the bulk of the capital; to Herbert Cook whose generous contribution enabled us to start, and to many others who in their several ways had helped the enterprise through its troubles. Martin Conway, Fry, Cust, MacColl, Ross and Colvin being the chief speakers besides the chairman, the evening lacked neither variety nor wit, and I was touched by many evidences of genuine goodwill, which now make the list of those present rather melancholy reading: Lord Plymouth, Lord Ronald Gower, Sir Edgar Speyer, Sir Richard Holmes, Sir Purdon Clarke, Sir Cecil Smith, Sir Isidore Spielmann, Sir Walter Armstrong, Lionel Cust, A. F. G. Leveson-Gower, G. F. Laking, Colonel Croft-Lyons, Roger E. Fry, Herbert Cook, D. S. MacColl, Whitworth Wallis, A. G. Temple, Sidney Colvin, C. H. Read, Laurence Binyon, Campbell Dodgson, G. F. Hill, A. M. Hind, A. van de Put, E. F. Strange, H. Clifford Smith, G. A. Whitworth, W. G. Rawlinson, R. Cripps, C. R. Rivington, Edward Dillon, Arthur Morrison, A. J. Finberg, A. Clutton-Brock, Lawrence Weaver, Robert Ross, S. M. Peartree, T. Sturge Moore, Charles Ricketts, Philip Norman,

Emery Walker, Max Rosenheim, A. Clifton, Frank Rinder, Marion Spielmann, Charles Shannon, G. Mayer, H. Velten, C. Llewelyn Davies, Frank Gibson, L. Gordon Stables, Harold Child, Bowyer Nichols, Sir Martin Conway.

Just before Christmas the Gallery received a notable gift from Ellen Terry;—her portrait of Henry Irving by Bastien-Lepage. She asked to be allowed to retain the fragment of a letter pasted upon the back. It read: 'I'm expecting Bastien-Lepage every moment. I'd cut up the nasty thing, but think you like it.' The modernist, no doubt, would dismiss the picture as a mere photographic snapshot. To me it seems almost a model of its kind. Drawn most ably, yet so lightly as to retain the sparkle of life, the small scale gives it an intimacy which larger portraits seldom retain. The artistic side of the Gallery, which I felt had been undervalued, was further reinforced three months later by Kneller's remarkable study of the Duke of Monmouth, as he lay after his execution. This masterly painting had been bequeathed to the Gallery by Sir Francis Seymour Haden, but he was now very old and in ill-health, so the Trustees agreed to purchase it.

We spent Christmas at Ramsden with T. W. Bacon and his wife, who endured the infliction of our whole family party. Essex in the fogs and frost of winter is not always or everywhere fascinating, but our host was a first-rate judge of pictures—one of the best, I think, in England—and his collection contained enough beauties, and enough critical puzzles, to keep us occupied when not called off by seasonable festivities, or the outdoor exercise they necessitate. Since the Ramsden Collection included two pictures of mine, *Mountains of the Abruzzi* and *The Rain of Ashes*, it was a relief to find that they held their own pretty well in that select assemblage. Yet I made, I fear, a scurvy return to my host for all this hospitality. Among the portraits was a sinister gentleman in a cuirass, by Robert Walker. The sitter's identity was then unknown, but research indicated that he was almost certainly the famous John Hampden;

Mr. Bacon in consequence felt bound to present him to the Gallery.

The year 1910 opened with a great disappointment. Mr. George Salting had bought Holbein's famous miniature of Anne of Cleves, intending it for the National Portrait Gallery, and had written the cheque for it at our Board Room table in Cust's presence. But when the terms of Salting's will came to be interpreted, this miniature was allotted, as part of his 'works of art,' to the Victoria and Albert Museum. Pierpont Morgan, too, had wanted this superb portrait. He told me how cross he was when it was brought to Salting's notice by my uncle Richard Holmes, and Cust had clinched the transaction.

As I looked through Salting's pictures with Holroyd and Berenson at Trafalgar Square, I could not help contrasting this superb bequest with Salting's habit of life. Some years before, I had come one winter morning, by appointment, to his rooms above the Thatched House Club. Salting had not yet got up, but he insisted on my climbing, boots and all, on to the very bed in which he was lying, so that I might look closely at a Constable which hung above it, near Crome's marvellous *Moonrise on the Yare*. Finally he rose, a strange figure with his long gray beard and crumpled nightgown, to show me some particular treasure. I feared the old gentleman would catch cold, so insisted upon retiring to the sitting-room till he had splashed in his saucer-bath, and got some clothes on. When he had done the honours of the things visible, he proceeded to reveal things hidden. Plunging into a drawer full of collars and handkerchiefs he pulled out a paper parcel. It contained a magnificent necklace which he hastily popped back, to rummage again until he found underneath the ivory which he wanted. He was always glad to get the opinion of others upon his purchases and, if he found it unfavourable, would dispose of the criticized treasure in part payment for some new purchase. The dealers against whom he pitted his wits sometimes took advantage of this peculiarity; first sending an emissary to

depreciate the object which they wanted, and then, when they judged him to be sufficiently alarmed, calling and consenting to take it off his hands as part of a fresh transaction.

Though a bottle of champagne was reputed to be an aid to business with him, if another paid for it, he was generally so indifferent to the luxuries, even the amenities of life, that his hospitality in any other man would have been accounted for meanness. Herbert Horne was asked to tea one day at 4.30. At 4.20 he had just got into Piccadilly when he ran right into Salting, coming out of the A.B.C. shop near the corner with a paper bag in his hand. They walked together to Salting's rooms. Salting sent down to the Club for two cups of tea, and when these came he opened the bag, producing two penny buns. My uncle Richard Holmes had a similar experience. He was invited to lunch and came up from Windsor for that purpose. Salting displayed his latest purchases until the table in his sitting-room was heaped with them. An hour or more was spent in this way, and still nothing was said about the expected meal. My uncle, a bit of a gourmet, grew fainter and fainter. At last he could bear it no longer, and said he really must be off to lunch. 'Oh! I forgot,' replied Salting and, clearing a space with a sweep of his arm among the outspread treasures, he pulled open the table drawer to produce two plates of cold beef.

The time had now come (February 1910) for resigning the Slade Professorship. My letter to the Vice-Chancellor drew from him a reply so warm and so grateful for help in the Ashmolean resettlement as to give me no little pleasure, even after making allowance for the customary compliments in such epistles. The 'Oxford Magazine' was still more flattering, but I wondered whether there was not a touch of irony in its opening sentence: 'The faithful audience which regularly filled the lecture-room of the Slade Professor heard with great regret the voice of the retiring occupant die away at the close of his last lecture on Wednesday.' Die away! It was the occasion on which, as I have related elsewhere, I nearly fell fast asleep on the platform.

The combat for the succession promised to be keen, and personally embarrassing too, since it involved two particular friends. Ricketts had long loved Oxford, its buildings and its collections. These he knew by heart; and we spent several days together there, walking about the place, and over my favourite Hinksey-Cumnor country. He was the first to hear of my impending retirement, and to get details of what was expected from a Professor. He even took lessons in elocution to fit himself for lecturing.

Then, at the end of January, Fry received his *congé* from America, 'a vile deed villainously done with every kind of hypocritical slaver. . . . Now, my dear Holmes, I must either get the Slade, or get sold up sooner or later—on the whole I prefer the former, and am going to draw up my application and submit it to you. . . . I'll come and talk things over with you soon and seek the consolation of yr. wisdom. You see the effect of my speaking on Liberal platforms here (Guildford), a Tory majority of 4000 odd.' Here was a pretty kettle of fish! Ricketts, regarding Fry as a kind of artistic Jesuit (to put it very mildly), would think me a traitor; but I felt bound to help both equally, so far as I could, and to avoid expressing a preference for either.

The situation was unexpectedly relieved by the needs of Selwyn Image, in whose favour Fry and Ricketts, like brother Philip Sidneys, both stood down. For the sake of Oxford I wished they had been less magnanimous. The ground was ready to receive fresh seed of a kind which the older man, with all his gentle good taste, could never sow. Fry might have found there not only an addition to his income, but the sympathetic environment which his temper and energies needed: Ricketts, generous, versatile, picturesque and perhaps the safer guide for youth, was so soon to develop his interest in the theatre that his sacrifice meant less to himself than to the University. Under either, the Golden Age of Ruskin might seem to have returned.

Colvin was another who regretted, for more personal

reasons, the way the Slade election had gone. He was looking forward, on his retirement from the Print-Room at the end of the year, to at least a moiety of the 'Burlington' editorship, and correspondence had passed which encouraged this hope. But now Fry had to squeeze into a place by the side of Cust in the editorial chair, and that left no possible room for a third occupant.

I was much engaged about this time with a new friend. My 'Science of Picture-Making,' having reached a second edition within a few months, brought me into frequent communication with its publishers, Chatto and Windus, and in particular with Philip Lee-Warner, the junior member of the firm. Tall, frail, nervous, impetuous, his energy seemed as inexhaustible as his audacity was terrifying to men of more cautious habits. Being now bent upon enlarging his firm's connexion with the fine arts, through books and colour-prints, his enthusiasm, coupled with his merry eye, enlisted me as an adviser for that purpose. Milner and I had been much inconvenienced by the absence of any reliable literature upon English sixteenth- and seventeenth-century painting. There was room for several new books upon this uncharted area, so, at Milner's suggestion, the Stuart period was chosen, and Collins Baker introduced as the man for the job. Baker fully justified our choice. Digging among archives, searching private collections, and marshalling his discoveries with singular critical acumen, he made at once a reputation for himself and a book which, in its own field, is unique. Twenty-five years of research have failed to sensibly enlarge or modify his account of 'Lely and the Stuart Portrait-Painters.'

The absolute authenticity of our National Portraits being of prime importance, any question raised about them was welcome, especially since investigation might produce curious results. One of General Gordon's relatives challenged a little portrait of him, said to have been painted at Cairo in January 1884, by a certain Leo Diet (who was he?), just before his journey to Khartoum. The challenge pro-



duced a series of visits from those who had known Gordon, and from some who had been with him at Cairo:—Col. Marsh, General Sir J. Bevan Edwards, Sir T. Francis, Sir Evelyn Wood, General Owen Jones, Colonel Bollard and Lord Cromer. Incidentally, the antiquity of the Lytton Strachey legend (or perhaps its innocent origin) was shown by one casual comment, 'That's not Gordon's eye. Gordon had a brandy-bottle eye.' The General's movements during every hour, from the time that he landed in Egypt to the time he went up to Khartoum, could be checked by those who had charge of him, and the result left no interval in which the alleged portrait could have been sketched. It must have been 'faked' from a photograph, and as a fake it was removed from the walls.

The portrait of Florence Nightingale in youth, by Augustus Egg, was the next to face the firing-party of family criticism. Here there was no question of fraud: the picture came to us direct from the Rathbones, old friends of Miss Nightingale. But could not those friends have been mistaken? Certainly the gentle girl in the portrait did not look like one who would afterwards develop into the imperious 'Lady of the Lamp.' Finally Miss Nightingale's niece, Mrs. Stephen, came with her husband to see if she could decide the question. Her first impression seemed to be unfavourable, but as she bent over the little painting I was suddenly struck by her wonderful likeness to it. When her husband's attention was drawn to the fact he exclaimed, 'Why, Barbara! It's the very image of you,' and the more we looked from the lady to the portrait the more unmistakable became the family connexion between them.

On another occasion a lady called to inform us that the accepted date for her grandfather's death was incorrect. He had undoubtedly, as she explained with very natural hesitation, circulated a report of his death at Macao in 1852, in order to escape from his wife and family, but had merely moved on from Macao to Peking. There for many years he enjoyed the friendship of the Emperor, until he was detected,

at the age of 101, in an intrigue with a lady of the Imperial household, and was permitted to take poison.

When I first came to the Gallery, I noticed in a dark corridor a portrait of Raikes the philanthropist, much in need of cleaning, but an original by Romney. I was corrected; it was only a copy of a Romney by Sir William Beechey, for which the Gallery had nevertheless been compelled to pay a stiff price. The original still belonged to the family. This seemed incredible. Every touch in the painting was Romney's own, and I could not believe Beechey capable of making any such minute facsimile. Later, the supposed original was sent to Christie's. One glance was enough to show us that a mistake had been made. The people who had driven so hard a bargain with Cust had sold him the Romney believing it to be a copy, and had retained the Beechey version for themselves.

Another and a much less admirable picture served at least to prove how fine was the Board's consideration for its officers. Among the portraits we put up for consideration before the assembled Trustees was one which happened to catch Lord Cobham's eye. He looked hard at it, scribbled a note, and had it passed up to me. It ran: 'Are you quite sure about L——? We have the same picture at Hagley as Lord B——, who bequeathed it to us himself.' The Board, when I explained the dubious identity, was equally considerate. Not a hint of reproach for imperfect examination: we might just make sure and report at the next Meeting. How few, in like circumstances, could have refrained from displaying their knowledge! With such masters it was impossible not to be happy and to do one's utmost.

The funeral of King Edward VII provided one memorable moment. My wife and I were allowed to stand on the Horse Guards Parade. As the procession moved slowly past us into the Mall, we were suddenly aware of three superb horsemen in scarlet emerging from the archway and moving abreast:—Sir Evelyn Wood, Lord Roberts and Lord Kitchener, all stern and erect, with the sunlight glittering on their panoply.

As a rule one looks down upon a state procession from a balcony or a window, whence even a Field-Marshal becomes a mere speck in a pageant. Here the riders on their great horses passed close by, towering above us. It was, I think, the most vivid and impressive spectacle I ever witnessed.

Our holidays in 1910 were spent with our children at Espland, for the most part uneventfully. Brackenber Moor with the fells behind still provided fresh material for sketching: a two-mile walk led to the Eden at Sandford and tolerable trout-fishing. Mrs. Herringham came to stay with us for a few days, and had some trouble in getting away. Fanny, the mare, our only steed, obstinately refused to be haltered (I'm an arrant funk and duffer at such things), and we all tried to catch her in vain. At last there was nothing for it but to pick up Mrs. Herringham's luggage, and to start with her to trudge to the station, nearly four miles away, my wife meanwhile persevering with the recalcitrant mare. We had got down off the moor, and staggered along a mile or more of the road, when a clatter was heard behind, and down the hill trotted Fanny in the trap, with my wife, so high was the driving-seat, looking like a veritable Jehu. Mrs. Herringham duly caught her train; but it was a bad business that one whom we regarded with particular affection and gratitude should have been picked by Fate to suffer such discomfort.

An excursion to visit our friends Dr. and Mrs. Carter, who had taken the vicarage at Barnard Castle, led me to the brink of real disaster. Carter, who was salmon-fishing, told me to bring a rod. I had only cheap, light trout-rods at Espland (Hardy's 'Boys' rods' are bad to beat for common use), so took over one of these, with flies and a Devon minnow. Rising from a second breakfast, welcome after a start in the small hours, we found the Tees running down nicely after a flood. I found, too, that we were on Lord Barnard's water, for which Carter had only a personal permit, and remembered that I had no licence even to fish the river. Carter pooh-poohed my qualms. He had fished

for a month, and nobody had asked for any papers. Lunch at one by a certain bridge was the all-important thing.

I was to fish down-stream, so down and down I went, finding the river everywhere too deep and full for profitable work. It was nearly a quarter to one before two promising pools appeared. In the first I touched a fish; and then, though time was up, could not resist a careful cast over the tail of the second. In a moment I was fast in a good sea-trout; the tackle was light, but duty to my hostess compelled drastic measures. The fish fought gamely enough, fouled me in a wire fence sunk in the river, and generally did his best: but was dragged somehow into the net, a fine three-pounder. Still I was already late, so with rod in one hand, net and fish in the other, I turned and ran as hard as I could up-stream, till I joined the luncheon party at the bridge, laid down my rod, with the minnow still attached, by the side of Carter's big salmon-rod, and was receiving the congratulations of the company when the unexpected happened.

Up the path by which I had come three minutes before a man approached. After glancing at the rods and the fish he asked politely for our permits. While Carter, blushing, produced his documents, I whipped out a sketch-book and bent to make a hasty study of the bridge, having ears but no eyes for what went on behind me. But my innocent hostess continued to say how much she admired my fish. I prayed that the keeper might not hear. To be convicted of taking sea-trout without any licence, on a private water for which I had no leave, and, as I subsequently found, with a lure which was forbidden in that particular month, was such a case of treble-dyed poaching that even my place as a Civil Servant might hardly have borne the strain of exposure. The awful moment passed, however, without the question being asked as to which rod had taken the fish. Yet I should certainly have been caught *flagrante delicto* had not consideration for my hostess led me to hurry that unlucky sea-trout, and take to my heels, just before the keeper reached that point on his beat.

On our return to London the first rumbling of the Post-Impressionist storm was heard. Fry wrote (October 3rd 1910): 'I'm afraid you've got to come on a Committee for the Cézanne, Van Gogh, Gauguin show at the Grafton Galleries. It's purely formal, just to give a blessing not to the pictures themselves, but to the idea that people may be allowed to look at them. So please be good and do as you're told.' Having served for some time on the Committee of the newly founded Contemporary Art Society, and being much interested by the few examples of Gauguin and others that I had seen, I was willing enough to help. But the violence of the controversy roused by the show, the criticism of officials, like Claude Phillips and myself, for backing what was deemed aesthetic Bolshevism, and the earnest wish of my friend Lee-Warner that I would write something for him, drove me to put together, very hastily, my first thoughts about the Movement.

'Notes on the Post-Impressionist Painters,' an attempt, in my usual rather cautious way, to survey the exhibition without bias, seemed to please nobody. Opinions at the time were too sharply divided for reconciliation. Ricketts was stirred by my liking for Van Gogh, and wrote at length, and trenchantly: 'This twisted touch is a common fact in the drawing of lunatics, *a doctor will tell you so*. . . . Why talk of the sincerity of all this rubbish? the lunatic is sincere who thinks he is Christ or Mr. Asquith. . . . Why this monopoly of sincerity for men who, like Fry and "tutti quanti," are doing all they can to advertise their sincerity, etc., etc. . . . P.S.—I am thinking of starting a national subscription to get Plymouth and Curzon painted by Matisse and Picasso.'

This view, that the Post-Impressionists were insane, found many adherents. Dr. Hyslop, a prominent alienist of the moment, delivered an illustrated lecture on the subject before the Art Workers' Guild. His arguments and evidence, however, were based upon such a complete misapprehension of the aims of painting, in all but its most commonplace and trivial aspects, that I was wholly unconvinced, and indig-

nant that this elementary, catch-penny stuff should be put forward as the verdict of Science. Yet his conclusions were accepted with such respect, and such enthusiastic applause, as left no doubt as to the sympathies of the artists and craftsmen there present. These were voiced by Selwyn Image in an appreciative little speech. Unwilling to oppose my successor at Oxford, I suggested, when called upon, that Fred Brown, as the other living Slade Professor, should speak in my place. To my delight he proved to be as little satisfied with the lecturer's evidence as I had been, and said so with his accustomed candour and pluck. His last words, coming as they did from one with his magnificent record, must have made his audience thoughtful: 'All I can say is, that if Van Gogh as an artist was mad, I wish I had a little of his madness.'

To Fry, however, my sympathy seemed too lukewarm, too pedantically qualified. I had hoped to rectify some hasty conclusions, about Cézanne and others, by an article in the 'Burlington.' It was rejected. Fry's letter states his point of view so admirably that I may be forgiven for quoting it. 'I'm awfully sorry that we cannot very well put your article on the Post-Impressionists into the January number of the Magazine, since we are already committed to one by Brock. He should, of course, have written in the "Times," but has been forestalled by "another." It is quite right we should differ about the value of Vlaminck, Matisse, etc.; the great point is we unite in admiring the others. I shall be very much interested to read your criticism, but do let me warn you not to have a consistent theory about art—it is very dangerous. It should be made up from time to time to suit the circumstances.'

Reviewing my 'Notes' he found me 'too much of the schoolmaster,' and congratulated me ironically on the courage shown by my 'patronizing estimate of Cézanne, in view of the almost complete unanimity among foreign critics in giving him a much more exalted position.' I fear I am still unrepentant. Cézanne's aims may have been all that his

worshippers believe: his achievements still appear to me unequal, including a number of admirable, original and powerful paintings, but also much that is slight, clumsy or misdirected. It would be much easier to accept his canonization if the failures were admitted, and not treated as masterpieces. This inability to distinguish between a man's failures and his triumphs is not the least of the confusions which the new aesthetic philosophy has brought with it. Practical painters, and critics of the Older School, knew that even a Rembrandt or a Titian might have an off-day. Modern theory, making the man the sole measure, draws no such distinction between products good and products less good;—an omission which the French dealers, very naturally, do not correct.

For me, Fry's rapid improvisations of perception and theory came too near to opportunism;—brilliant, suggestive and stimulating, no doubt, but compelled, by the need for momentary predominance, to obscure or denounce all other beacon lights, even those which time had shown to be trustworthy, and which, just before, had been most carefully tended. My cautious, prosaic mind could only approach new phenomena by attempting to connect them logically with the great parent stem of artistic life. This habit has led me continually, I fear, to underestimate the services done to mankind by the vehement advocates, who force the case of each client of the moment to be heard, although the ultimate summing-up may shear away the best part of their arguments. In thinking Fry too prone to disproportionate enthusiasms, I forgot that I owed the main interest of my own life to Ruskin.

At the moment, however, my attention was distracted by a second 'one man show' at Carfax. This was well noticed, and almost everything was sold to buyers whose names could not fail to please a comparative novice. In addition to friends, acquaintances and keen judges like Eric Maclagan, T. W. Bacon, Walter Taylor, Herbert Trench, Frank Stoop and Lord Henry Bentinck, two collectors on a

larger scale appeared. One of them, Geoffrey Blackwell, I had met some weeks earlier, through an odd sequence of events. In April 1909 I had been asked to write an article for the 'Times' upon Steer's exhibition at the Goupil Gallery. My friend Clutton-Brock was not then securely established as its art critic, and thought the occasion called for an outside specialist. The article happened to catch Blackwell's eye; interested him enough to lead him to start collecting Steer, and subsequently to try to track down the anonymous writer to whom he owed this new pleasure in life. At the end of eighteen months he had got as far as Brock, and from Brock he got to me, proving his gratitude by an excellent lunch and the purchase of several drawings from Carfax.

Professor Michael Sadler, with his charming wife and brilliant son, collected on larger lines, and for many years have played so considerable a part in my life as to make this moment of first acquaintance a memorable event. Being North-country people, the Sadlers were full of the spirit of the hills, and this they found in the subjects from Yorkshire and the Lake District which composed the bulk of my little show. I felt rather a fraud over two of their favourite paintings. One, *The Beck from Goatswater*, was done entirely from memory of the drenching I got there with my brother in the summer of 1883, before I had even thought of sketching. The other, *Summer on the Fells*, had an origin still more unsubstantial. My son Robin, as a baby, was scrawling on a piece of paper. The casual pencil outline suggested a design: all that remained was to give it solidity. The generous but always critical interest which the Sadlers took in my work continued when the Professor had accepted the Vice-Chancellorship of Leeds University. In consequence they own, or have presented to public institutions, quite a considerable part of my output.

Though I was naturally encouraged by their good opinion, I might still have regarded it as a friendly and personal enthusiasm were it not for another incident. I was surprised



one day at the Portrait Gallery by a visit from Tonks. He did not beat about the bush, but told me that it was my plain duty to give up my official work and take to painting as a profession. Strang, fifteen years earlier, had said much the same. Now I could only return much the same answer:—that I was conscious only of a very limited vein of creation; that it would be exhausted at once if I tried to work it seven days in the week. ‘Very well,’ Tonks replied, ‘I’ve said what I felt bound to say, and I won’t say it again.’ So he departed, leaving me rather shaken, for his authority could not be lightly set aside.

He had long been famous as one of the great forces at the Slade School, where, with Professor Brown and Steer, he had taught a generation to draw, to paint and to support the New English Art Club. The Club at this time was almost at the height of its fame. The Suffolk Street Galleries gave ample space for the water-colours and drawings of Steer, Tonks, Max Beerbohm, Muirhead Bone and other masters of the craft, and also showed to advantage the paintings which, season after season, were provided by John, Orpen, Sargent, Sickert, Rothenstein, Russell, MacEvoy, Pissarro and others, including, of course, the trio from the Slade School. If the Slade element did preponderate upon the Selecting Jury, I never found it unfair. Once, indeed, it rejected, quite rightly, a drawing of mine while I was actually serving upon it. Another time, a portrait by Sargent, an undistinguished performance, only just escaped rejection by the Secretary’s casting vote.

The predominance of the Slade School may have given its promising students a slightly better chance of consideration than unknown outsiders, but the few complaints came from older artists who expected more prominence than accident or the Hanging Committee had given them. The long experience of the senior members, aided by Francis Bate’s shrewd judgment, led to the arrangement of the pictures being as effective as their selection had been careful, so that the Club came to enjoy an unwonted popularity with the

public and the Press. I learned much from serving on the Committee, and was constantly stimulated by the desire to make a respectable show among men so much better trained, and more highly gifted. It was an honour to be accepted by them at all, and if I could have fairly earned a prominent place I was sure that it would not be denied. Only once, in the winter of 1911, did I seem to come near to such prominence with a painting of *Saddleback from the S.W.*, an experiment inspired by the example of Korin. The picture shocked Claude Phillips and others by its violence, but really interested Ricketts, and so pleased my friend Cripps that, when it remained unsold, I made him a present of it.

Looking back over the events of 1911 I wonder that there should have been any time left for painting. The official routine was complicated by the redecoration of the building section by section, and by an entire rearrangement of the portraits, while outside matters combined to keep me busy. My uncle Richard Holmes, now bedridden, needed attention, and the troublesome executorship which followed his death in March needed still more. His rather lonely end, in a cramped South London flat, made a sad contrast to the spacious days when, as a boy, I had visited him in the Library at Windsor, surrounded by the great ones of the earth and every comfort imaginable. I had not realized till then that these amenities of life last only so long as a man can play his part in public.

Committee meetings—National Art-Collections Fund, Contemporary Art Society, New English Art Club; Walpole Society, Alfred Stevens Memorial and the like—made no such constant claim as did my friend Lee-Warner. His projects for new 'Medici' prints; for new books, including a series of works on Angling edited by H. T. Sheringham and Eric Parker; a new translation of Vasari which had to be 'read' and illustrated; Collins Baker's innumerable needs for his volumes on Lely; negotiations, not always friendly and rarely simple, with other persons or firms;—all these involved endless meetings, talks and letters.

Then my own book, 'Notes on the Art of Rembrandt,' had to be finished and seen through the Press. In its predecessor, 'Notes on the Science of Picture-Making,' I had tried to work out the elements of studio practice. Now I wished to study the lines on which an artist might develop his personal gifts to the best advantage, taking the life and work of Rembrandt as the subject for demonstration. The Oxford lectures on which the idea was founded had been popular; I gave some care to its presentation in book form; the book was favourably reviewed—and fell between several stools. Its advocacy of self-training could not recommend it to professional art teachers; the style was not enough to make it live as literature; the critical matter was almost immediately absorbed, superseded and buried by the issue of my friend A. M. Hind's exhaustive catalogue. A good many years passed before the first edition went 'Out of Print,' and the rate of sale did not warrant any reissue.

Officialdom brought with it a new range of social experiences. At one Academy Banquet, Mr. Asquith treated the company to a speech of such masterful irony that I was compelled to admiration, in spite of my Conservative dislike for the 'sinister activities' of his Government. Mr. Lloyd George's Limehouse demagogy, Mr. Winston Churchill's election cry of 'Chinese Slavery' (We won't have any b——y Chinese coming here to take the bread out of our mouths,' I heard one workman remark on polling-day), seemed venial offences compared with the doings of Mr. Birrell, his slandering of our troops in the critical days of the Boer War ('hecatombs of slaughtered babes' and the like), and fatal, flippant evasion of his plain duties in Ireland. Almost alone, John Morley seemed free from open defects, and even he, when I heard him speak, proved rather more complacent than his repute, and not quite so genuine. At a Downing Street Garden Party, however—where Anthony Asquith, a little boy with a big mane of blond hair, was more conspicuous than most of the distinguished company—Mr. Lloyd George, seen clearly in the flesh, left a pleasant impression. I had

to watch him on Holroyd's behalf, to wait until he had set down his coffee-cup and was turning from the table, so that Holroyd might catch him unoccupied and ask for help towards the purchase of the big Mabuse *Adoration* from Castle Howard. He got it.

With the Rembrandt *Mill*, belonging to Lord Lansdowne, Holroyd had been less fortunate. We had been anxious about the picture for some years before it actually came into the market. A London collector had bought a historic portrait from Lord Lansdowne for £10,000. 'Offer him the same for *The Mill*,' counselled the collector's adviser. He did so. The reply was a refusal, but a refusal qualified by the words, 'Had the offer been £20,000 I might have considered it.' 'Take him at his word at once,' was now the counsellor's advice. But the collector, always keen for a bargain, offered £15,000, and this time there was no reply. At £20,000, *The Mill*, one of the irreplaceable masterpieces in the country, was clearly at any foreigner's mercy. When Lord Lansdowne was offered £100,000 for it, its loss was a foregone conclusion. He was willing to allow the Nation a rebate of 10 per cent. on that price, and the picture was placed on exhibition at Trafalgar Square. But the miracle of the 'Norfolk' Holbein was not repeated, and *The Mill* was carried off to Philadelphia.

One consolation remained. When I first saw *The Mill*, the patination of time had invested it with mystery and magnificence. But when shown at Trafalgar Square it had been recently cleaned, and so drastically that all its glamour was gone. It was hard, bright, almost common. Nor, when I saw it in America nearly twenty years later, had it completely recovered. Cleaning has done much to reveal the magic and smouldering colour in many of Rembrandt's later works: indeed, until they *were* cleaned with modern thoroughness, their beauties were unknown and unsuspected. But *The Mill* was too delicate for any such strong remedies.

One great experience came at the end of 1911: Edmund Gosse, as kind in person as he was caustic in debate, asked

me to dinner to meet the Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith's character at the time was hardly more respected by Tory gossip than were his measures. Those who had worked under him were no less unanimous in their liking. I was naturally curious to judge for myself, and since neither Henry James, Professor Fitzmaurice Kelly, nor Walter Sickert (present, he informed me, as the son-in-law of Richard Cobden) were in need of particular attention, I was able to listen undisturbed to the great man opposite and his table-talk. Presently Gosse remarked, 'Oh! I had a curious experience the other day. Lord Curzon confessed to me that his secret ambition had always been the life of a plain country gentleman. If he could only get out of politics, he would settle down on his estates and take no more part in public life.' 'When did he tell you this?' asked the Prime Minister. 'Last Thursday,' was the reply. 'Ah! The day after Bonar Law was elected Leader of the Conservative Party.'

When Mr. Asquith had been comfortably settled in an arm-chair by the fire, each of us was taken up in turn to have ten minutes' talk with him. While encountering rather heavy weather between Henry James and Professor Kelly (Henry James was definitely lethargic), I was startled by hearing the voice of Sickert saying clearly and cheerfully to the Prime Minister, 'I am a master in a London County Council School, and I owe my job to Holmes over there. That reminds me, Mr. Asquith, if you ever *should* need a testimonial, take my advice, and get Holmes to write one for you.' Bless his merry impudence!

When my turn came I was asked about the methods of my Board, explained how happy I was, and how smoothly everything worked owing to Lord Dillon's tact and sense of humour. 'Yes,' said Mr. Asquith, 'a sense of humour is useful, even with a Cabinet.' He then proceeded to ask me about Mr. Walter Morrison's offer to rebuild Balliol Chapel, in a style more congruous than Butterfield's with the rest of the College. Such accretions of various periods were, I felt,

part of the character of all ancient foundations, and should not be removed just to obtain factitious uniformity. 'Yes,' commented Asquith, 'our Chapel is a landmark of 'Istory, as my friend John Burns said of the river Thames.' I have often wondered since whether this humorous outlook upon life did not lead him to rely too much upon adroitness in debate, of which he was a master; to smile at weakness in his colleagues, especially the wittiest of them, a little too often, and much too long for his own ultimate repute. Firm enough in himself, he was, perhaps, too steadfast a friend to be the perfect ruler.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY (ii)

(1912-1916)

Rearrangement of the Gallery; its importance to the Nation; pleasures of Langton Field; Oscar Wilde monument; Holbein's *Archbishop Warham*; a story of Lord Curzon; exhibition at Carfax; Reginald Farrer; 'The Tarn and the Lake'; pictures and noble owners; the suffragettes; first consequences of the War; the V.C.F. and the R.N.V.R.; duty at Sandringham; lectures at Dublin; arrest as a spy; retirement of Holroyd; a letter to Lord Ribblesdale; appointment to Trafalgar Square.

OUR paramount occupation from 1910 to 1912 was the re-hanging of the whole collection, and the redecoration of the building. In this latter task we found sympathetic coadjutors in Sir Lionel Earle and Mr. Norton of the Office of Works, with whose help we were able to transform the whole place. Under the old, dirty, green wall-paper lay deal panelling of tolerable quality. By staining this woodwork, by painting the upper part of the walls white, and by adding a cornice where necessary, we managed to give the galleries a far-off resemblance to panelled rooms in a Tudor mansion. Not only was the artistic effect of the earlier portraits notably enhanced by the semi-traditional background, but they seemed to derive from it a historic character and atmosphere unlike that of a mere modern museum.

To maintain this character by grouping pictures in chronological sequence, and to reconcile it with decorative display, often seemed hopeless. A room might have to be hung five or six times before we could feel that we had got the least bad result from our materials. Also the general sequence of rooms and periods had to be so arranged that, when the much-needed extension of the building came, there would

be no need to reshuffle the contents, or break with historical continuity. The weeding out of unimportant portraits and duplicates (as already mentioned) was well received by the public and the Press ; being the first occasion, in England, when minor possessions had been definitely set apart in order that the major things might be shown to advantage. By starting, with the aid of Mr. Walter Stoneman, a National Photographic Record, we hoped to provide for the commoner wants of the future.

I have always had a fanatic belief in the potential value of the National Portrait Gallery, as a living adjunct and illustration to our national history. The more democratic we grow, the more perilous, at any crisis, is the absence of a historical sense on the part of the electorate. No feature of our time is more disquieting than the efforts made elsewhere, and occasionally in England, to distort or suppress the experience of the past, if it appears to conflict with the intrigues of a party or the interest of a politician. As an essential feature in our national education, the National Portrait Gallery, even now, is greatly undervalued. Were it used, as an autocrat would use it, for teaching every schoolboy and schoolgirl, within a workable radius, what English learning, courage and enterprise have achieved, our outlook upon the future would be far less uncertain. Judging by the number of American visitors twenty-five years ago—if not also by the ‘souvenirs,’ the spurs from effigies and the tablets from frames, which they were wont to break off—the Eastern States actually seemed to take more interest in English history than the English themselves. Lord Sudeley’s efforts and guide-lecturers have done much to improve things since then. Yet until our educational authorities all recognize that examination papers are not a complete preparation for civic life, we cannot expect to see this unique collection put to its full and proper use.

From these solemn concerns, our holidays in 1912 and 1913 gave us a welcome change. We had rented for £20, and roughly furnished for a similar sum, a little modern



farm-house, rather like a humble vicarage, at the northern end of Brackenber Moor. Langton Field stood on a knoll in the middle of a big pasture, across which visitors had to pick their way,—a precarious business at nightfall, among the cattle and their adjuncts. Below the house lay the old farm where our landlord lived, by the ruinous paddock of the bull which, a year previously, had killed his father in front of our very door. Whenever we passed that way, the brute's gloomy, savage head still eyed us through a gap in the crumbling wall.

Braced perpetually by the sharp air of the Pennines, we all enjoyed rude health and a singular diversity of attractions. Visitors to that remote spot were not many. Yet one afternoon I particularly remember, for it produced a singularly handsome couple, young Michael Sadler and his fiancée, who descended upon us quite unexpectedly from a long tramp over the moors, like visible embodiments of the wind and sunshine. For sport of a humble kind the place was unrivalled. Less than three hundred yards away ran Hylton Beck, which could be followed, more or less, and fished for some two miles. On the far bank lay Brackenber Moor with its breezy golf-course, never crowded in those days and absurdly cheap. The farm itself had big fields all round, where rabbits sat out in the gloaming to be potted with a .22 rifle, and always, within a mile or so, lay the main ridge of the Pennines, with the great basaltic gorge of High Cup Nick, the peak of Murton Pike, the hump of Roman Fell, all changing shape and proportion as one walked. In the house I had a little back room of my own, with a small chair and table, where one could write or draw so long as the light lasted and no other occupation pressed.

The normal routine would begin with a round of golf, and a sketch or two if the clouds and scenery inspired it. Then drawing or writing till tea-time, followed by a trial of the beck with up-stream worm or fly, according to the state of the water. Half-pounders then were not uncommon, and once I almost had my neck broken by a fish of nearly

a pound, which tore down in and out of the boulders below me for a hundred yards, while I ran stumbling, slipping and splashing in his wake. Finally I got a hand to his fat side and heaved him out into the heather. By six o'clock it was too cold even for the trout, but the rabbits were beginning to show, and among them the day's adventures ended.

The uncertainty of local tradesmen's deliveries in this remote sanctuary was its chief drawback. Having no Fanny to bear us over the switchback miles to Appleby, I got used to carrying a large market-basket thither on Saturday morning, loading it with the outstanding needs of the kitchen, and tramping back with it uphill. It was some consolation to recognize the change from the warm frowst, as it seemed in comparison, of the Eden Valley to the clean stimulating airs of Langton, three hundred feet up the hillside. To that air and to those diversions 'The Tarn and the Lake' owes any spirit it may possess. It is the single piece of writing that I did with real zest, feeling free, for once, from all the responsibilities, artistic, literary and official, which commonly cramped my conscience.

Our diversions at the Gallery included the inspection of a little mare's nest of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century portraits, all of them manufactured within the last fifty years from prints or photographs, and the dilemma occasioned by the offer of Boldini's slashing portrait of Lady Colin Campbell. Was she famous enough for acceptance? Was not the picture too brilliant to be refused? Our 'Ten Years Rule' and the Newcastle Art Gallery in the end provided a way of escape, except from the keen eye of one cynic, who sent us a postcard, purporting to come from a rival society beauty, and protesting against the business in terms too scandalous for quotation.

Even official figures and accounts had their humorous moments. We had conceived a scheme whereby the cost of administering the Gallery could be reduced by £650 in the remaining half of the financial year; hoping that such a spontaneous retrenchment would encourage our lords and

masters at the Treasury to give us the little help towards the publications, etc., which we so badly needed. But when we submitted the scheme for criticism to the author of sundry profound works on public economy and high finance, he could not see that a saving of £650 in six months was equivalent to £1300 in a full year. A few days later, having at last worked out the sum, he came round to get credit for the discovery.

The queerest muddle of all arose from the National Insurance Act of 1912. Most of its verbiage we managed to puzzle out for ourselves, but a point about the pay of charwomen for a half-day's work remained wholly incomprehensible. Reading the 'Times,' as my habit was, I lighted upon an answer in Parliament which gave us the Government's interpretation of the Act. I duly passed on the glad news to Hawes Turner, the much worried secretary of the National Gallery, and to our charwomen; paying wages and producing stamps in accordance with the House of Commons ruling. The Treasury, however, had taken a different view of the cryptic paragraph, as I learned some months later when they demanded a refund of the monies we were alleged to have overpaid.

Some little time before, I had agreed to act as arbitrator between those responsible for erecting the memorial to Oscar Wilde in Paris, and Epstein, who was to carve it. The one stipulation I made, and always make in such cases, was that I should be absolutely free to use my own judgment, whatever strict law or apparent equity might demand. This freedom was needed. As happens so often, the colossal sphinx was nearly finished in Epstein's Chelsea studio, but the sculptor needed a further advance to get it completed and set up in Père la Chaise. When the parties and their legal representatives had argued the case before me, with more vehemence than tact, I gave a decision which the one side denounced as contrary to law, the other as less than justice. But the monument got finished and put up, which was the main thing.

A far more anxious and delicate problem followed. Lord Dillon's version of Holbein's *Archbishop Warham* (now bequeathed by him to the National Portrait Gallery) developed large blisters in the background. At Lord Dillon's request I took the picture to Buttery for restoration; only to be met with a refusal. 'I should have to charge the old gentleman £100 or more, and I can't do that. You had better just fill up the places yourself.' Like a fool I consented, mainly from the wish to save my kind Chairman from a heavy expense. The first thing was to get the blisters laid, and my heart sank as I watched the professional at work. It was like seeing a friend operated upon for appendicitis with a tin-opener, and the shattered holes that remained when the operation had ended were quite terrifying.

Having, at the time, only a theoretic knowledge of the gesso filling which restorers employ, I decided to risk using flake-white. Weeks passed before I could plaster the gaps with the wretched stuff, and get the surface tolerably level with the original. Even then I had to face the well-known obstacle to all repairs with oil-paint, the darkening of the oil, which makes such restorations tell after a few years as brown patches. I understood, however, that one pigment, Brown Pink, was absolutely fugitive. If it only acted up to its reputation, its fading might counterbalance the darkening of the oil. So I spent week after week matching the pattern of the curtain with that fugitive yellow-brown and a permanent green, varnished the patches to match the rest, and finally returned the thing to its owner, whose patience (no wonder!) was wearing a little thin. When I next went to stay at Ditchley, I sneaked round at the first convenient moment to inspect the patches. To my intense relief I found them invisible and, as they have remained so for some twenty years since then, I trust they will outlast my lifetime. After seeing some of the great professional restorers at work, I realize what a risk I took, and my good luck in escaping from it.

At the end of November 1912 I gave evidence before a

Committee of the National Gallery Trustees as to the retention of important pictures in England, and other matters connected with the National Collections. Fry was the witness who preceded me, and it was amusing to see the courage with which he faced the rather overwhelming manner of Lord Curzon. The Committee certainly collected a mass of facts and opinions bearing on administrative questions, and its Report, issued in 1915 in the form of an official document, was sensible enough upon such simple matters as the Chantrey Bequest, and the best way of managing the Tate Gallery. But on harder and more vital problems—the limitation of the national aims to a few irreplaceable masterpieces; the means to secure these few masterpieces against foreign purchasers, whether by a capital fund or otherwise, and the all-important business of the Director's authority—the issue was discreetly evaded; in the last case on the remarkable ground that the majority of the Committee had insufficient experience.

Lord Carlisle, on the other hand, with twenty-two years' experience, had made a courageous protest against the subordination of the Director to the Trustees. But he had recently died, and his protest, though not actually suppressed in the Report, was printed inconspicuously on the last page of it, among the Addenda to Lord Rosebery's famous, or fatal, Minute of 1894, which set up the present constitution in the place of that under which Eastlake, Boxall and Burton had achieved their triumphs.

I rather liked the little I had seen of Lord Curzon. My impression was confirmed by a story I heard at dinner from Ralph Knott, the young architect of the County Hall, who had been helping with the restoration of Tattershall Castle. The prospect round the castle would have been pleasing but for one staring red cottage. 'Ivy is indicated, I think,' said Lord Curzon: so over to the cottage they walked, to find a large lady occupied with the family washing. Lord Curzon speedily gained her good graces by praising the situation and convenience of the cottage; then led tactfully

up to the topic of ivy, its varieties, and what he would be happy to provide. All was practically settled, when a photograph on the wall was noticed. It showed the woman's husband, a soldier, who had served in India at a place which the wife named, and mispronounced. Lord Curzon could not refrain from correcting her. 'My husband ought to know,' was the reply, 'he was stationed there.' 'Yes,' said Curzon, 'but I know still better, for I was Viceroy of India.' 'Ah! get on with you,' answered the woman, and taking him by the shoulder she pushed him out of the house. Far from being angry, he rocked with laughter, saying only, 'I fear that ivy-planting will have to be postponed.'

Life at this time was worth living. The confidence of our good Chairman, the cheerful, canny promptings of Milner, rendered even the dullest routine-work tolerable, so that I could spend every spare moment, without more than an occasionable grumble, in trying to humanize our official catalogue. Another 'one man show' at Carfax, in February 1913, though it did not lead to many sales, was generously received. Drawings now seemed quite as popular as paintings. Lord Henry Bentinck began to form the group of North-country mountain landscapes in his study at Underley: Dr. and Mrs. Michael Sadler, recently translated to Leeds, acquired a similar taste for Industrial subjects. Their encouragement and criticism led me to persevere in a field of work unattractive to Londoners, and were the more surprising because the Sadlers themselves were now incessantly occupied with developing Leeds University, and surrounded by the menace of Labour disputes, where their high sense of civic duty was constantly at issue with their pity for genuine distress.

Returning from Appleby in the previous autumn, I had been sketching, as usual, from the carriage window, when I was startled by a remark from a plump little man with lively dark eyes, sitting just opposite. 'Excuse me: but you must be C. J. Holmes.' The acute observer introduced himself as Reginald Farrer, and started to talk. By the time

we reached St. Pancras, we had discovered so many tastes in common that I promised to come and see him at Ingleborough in the following spring, and try for certain uncatchable trout in his lake. So there I found myself on a bitter March morning, with just half-an-hour to fish before the car came round to take me about. Snow was drifting over the black waves, but something like a swirl near my fly gave me hope, and in a short time I was able to run down to the house with a brace of half-pounders in my net. Swathed in rugs and coats and scarves we then faced the elements in a little open car, driving round to Ribbleshead by Stainforth, whence my Swainson ancestors had come, past a nobly snow-streaked Ingleborough, stopping wherever a subject for frozen fingers was suggested, and finally returning to the house, the lake and to sunshine. But not a rise could I now entice: the water evidently intended to guard its reputation henceforth, and we fell back on talking and walking.

The next day was glorious, and we tramped over the hills from Troll Gill to Sulber Nick, that miracle of desolation, chanting absurd verses in abuse of Sophocles, whom we both disliked, and behaving generally like schoolboys. Farrer, the professed Buddhist, loved to pass in a moment from the sublime to the ridiculous, to be as brilliant and as silly as he was learned in letters and in botany. His spirits and his good temper were inexhaustible, and his consideration too. On our last morning he ran me down to the edge of his famous rock-garden and back, so that I could just say that I had seen it, without having to pretend to be interested. Indeed to me the garden looked just like the usual barren mixture of earth and stones, without a touch of colour, in which Alpine botanists discourse of glories to come; though the stones were larger and piled more grandly than any I had seen elsewhere. The one remark I made was unlucky. The mention of Clutton-Brock's garden in Surrey drew down a sudden outburst of the eternal disrespect of the man who does things for the man who writes about them.

Farrer, indeed, for all his lightness of heart and exuberance of language, was now preparing for another of his arduous expeditions to the highlands of China in search of new flowering plants. He introduced me to chopsticks, to tea made in native fashion, which exhilarates at the moment but leaves the mind afterwards a perfect blank, and to Chinese delicacies, like buried eggs, which resemble (when they are not mouldy) some ancient ethereal cheese. I got news of him next in the autumn of 1914, from the borders of Thibet, where he lived precariously between hillmen, who wanted his blood for disturbing the mountain spirits when he climbed, and the armies of White Wolf which were ravaging the plains. 'Do you realize,' he writes, 'that besides the ten thousand rotting dead who still stack the gutted streets of Taochow (the address for my reply), the air is poisoned for miles by the carrion of every other living creature down to cats and dogs and hens?' And later, when wintering in peace at Lanchow, while we were in the throes of the War, he describes his work as 'a breathless rush and scurry for the past three months, pursuing the elusive seed from pillar to post. Up and down, in and out, over crag and valley I toiled and lumbered, deciphering the glories of the spring in the fat pods of the present, which, as often as not, were empty, or unripe, or unsound, or vanished, or trampled, or eaten, or hail-battered, by the time I got to them.' Few men have impressed me more than this merry soul, whom I met so casually and knew so briefly, this lover of ease and civilized comfort, who sacrificed them, and ultimately his own life, to hunt in savage and dangerous places for the little flowers which now bear his name.

At Allestree, near Derby, Sir Herbert Raphael introduced me to his fishing, a small stream converted by dams into the semblance of a river, and well stocked with trout. The Mayfly was up, but as we passed through Derby on our way to the water, I noticed that my host bought a dozen Red Palmers at the local tackle-shop. He was no fool, and I followed his lead by taking the three left in the box. The



Mayfly was about in plenty, but I could do nothing with it. Finally I saw one alight on a broad clear pool just over a trout. The trout, seemingly puzzled by the apparition, merely nibbled at its legs, until the Mayfly, sensing danger, fluttered off for two or three feet, and the trout sank down. Not until we talked at lunch did light dawn upon me. The fish, being more than the stream could naturally support, received artificial food, including chopped horseflesh. That explained the Red Palmers. The moment I was free, I put on an extra large one which I happened to have. In two hours I had taken five brace (six brace was the limit) weighing  $17\frac{1}{2}$  lbs., and returned about as many. Never have I had such a day. In spite of this artificial feeding, the brown trout proved lively fighters, the rainbows indefatigable, though without the cunning of the native breed. Since my beat was much overgrown, this cunning had scope for exercise, and the triumph was not always the fisherman's.

By the issue of 'The Tarn and the Lake,' a comparison between the ways of fishes and of men, my passion for fishing was now, momentarily, exposed. But in spite of many notices, as diverse as the politics of its reviewers, the little book fell flat; perhaps because it neither pretended to teach tyros to fish, nor flattered the prevalent intellectual socialism. Fry, for instance, wrote from his Omega Workshops that I seemed to be 'bolstering up people in their natural beastliness.' Ricketts, with his usual foresight, challenged my Disraelian view of the Press as an antidote to the Demagogue. 'The Press is as great a danger to the Public in its cooking of opinion and fact as the intellectual trust of the Jesuits in the 17th century.' How right Time has proved him to be! Edmund Gosse, on the other hand, found it 'profoundly interesting as an apologue, besides being delicately written . . . your experience coincides with my own.' I solaced my failure with these and similar kind remarks. Then, many years later, Max Beerbohm, chance-met by the National Gallery, asked in his whimsical way, why I did not give up my official life, and write something more like 'The

Tarn and the Lake'? Finally, when Eric Parker quoted nearly a page of it in his 'Angler's Garland,' *sublimi feriebam sidera vertice*.

The fine head and presence of our Chairman suggested a portrait medal, for which the Board subscribed. At Oxford I had made the acquaintance of Sydney Carline, son of a well-known local painter, himself a modeller of promise. Carline produced a good likeness, and for the reverse of his medal designed, in Pisanello fashion, an armadillo, that being Lord Dillon's telegraphic address as Keeper of the Tower Armouries. When the bronze casts arrived, the new metal looked so cheap and common that we did not dare to distribute them until they had been slightly toned down, and considerably begrimed, by exposure on the Gallery roof. Sydney Carline afterwards attracted notice by his pictures of 'planes fighting among the Italian Alps, but never, I think, attained quite the same distinction there as in his best medals.

About the same time we received from Mrs. Henley the bronze bust of her husband by Rodin, one of the finest of all Rodin portraits, and heard the first mutterings of the suffragette tempest. These, while indicating flustered nerves in some quarters, appeared much too vague for immediate or overt panic. We merely replaced by less valuable substitutes a few of our smaller treasures, which a single fanatic blow might have damaged irreparably.

The death of Lord Knutsford was felt by us as real personal loss. In spite of his great age, he had tripped about the Gallery, almost to the last, with the lively step of a young man, taking the keenest interest in its growth, eager to help in his modest way towards any fresh purchase, and giving us always the consideration and the courtesy of a real friend. Gentle wit and wisdom illuminated his retrospect upon a long and active life. In boyhood, on a walking tour with his brother, he had been to visit the famous Jeffrey. But the house and its grounds looked so imposing, that from shyness the young visitors hid the carpet bag, which was all

their luggage, in the bushes by the drive, and got away without staying there. Six months earlier, the death of my cousin Francis Rivington reminded me how much I owed to him. By inviting me from Oxford to enter his business, he had saved me, at the cost of some years of discomfort, from the prospect of lifelong servitude as a third-rate schoolmaster; to the example of his strong intelligence and personality I owed such fragments of common sense and method as I could now claim. Finally, in December, Francis Bate retired from the Secretaryship of the New English Art Club. The dinner, and presentation to him of a drawing by every member, were tokens of gratitude and admiration more genuine than such things are apt to be, for with extraordinary tact and judgment he had brought the Club through countless difficulties, until now it had reached (though we did not know it) the climax of its fortune. After the War nothing was quite the same.

The end of the year 1913 brought two regrettable changes. The privacy of our house at Ladbroke Grove, with its excellent studio, being threatened by a neighbouring invasion, we left it for less imposing quarters in Pembridge Crescent. About the same time our landlord at Langton Field gave up his farm, so that almost perfect refuge from the world was also lost to us. My father-in-law, it is true, quickly found a substitute, more pleasant to the eye, and near to his own house, on the other side of Appleby, but far, too far altogether, from the fells, the beck, the golf-course and the moor which had long been our playgrounds.

Since our new abode would not be vacant till the summer, we spent Easter at Lyme Regis, where the old houses and tumbled cliffs provided plenty of material for drawings, but did not somehow inspire paintings in oil. An afternoon's trout-fishing on the Colne near Sandy Lodge, with Francis Draper, best of fellows and frame-makers, is another pleasant memory of the early summer of 1914. My chief exhibit at the New English Art Club was *The Burning Kiln*, developed, not without effort, from a sketch near Purley. It was bought

by Dr. Michael Sadler, who presented it some years later to the Tate Gallery. He also bought my *Birches*, *Clay Cross* from the Club's winter show. Time, I fancy, has muted its deep French Blues into a rather pleasant gray, but, when I last saw it, it still seemed the happiest of my efforts in the Neo-Japanese vein.

At the Gallery we learned, from a portrait by Kneller of all people, what the modelling of a head in paint really ought to be. This *Henry Sidney* proved how great were the natural gifts of that most unequal painter. We compared it with portrait after portrait in the Gallery, to find that only Van Dyck, and occasionally Gainsborough, achieved the same solidity. A Reynolds was apt, as Max Beerbohm remarked, to suffer from floating kidney of the face. Max had come with the idea of getting likenesses of the Trustees for a group caricature, perhaps a 'Death of Mr. Bernard Shaw,' with the Board sitting perplexed before tier upon tier of Shaw portraits in every conceivable style and medium. For me, a scribble on the back of an envelope was a sufficient memento; but Lord Dillon refused to be sketched, and so nothing came of the scheme.

The portraits of the Brontë sisters, by their brother Branwell, gave us some anxiety. The canvases, discovered rolled up on the top of a wardrobe, had to be sold for the benefit of Mrs. Nicholls. As her Trustee, Mr. Reginald Smith, the Publisher and K.C., was compelled to dispose of them to the best advantage. What might not America bid for these remarkable relics? In the end Christie's were asked to value them, and their figure, fortunately, proved to be just within our means. It would have been heart-breaking had we failed to secure at least that profile of Emily Brontë, into which the very spirit of 'Wuthering Heights' and of her poetry seems somehow to have passed.

People were not always so patriotic and considerate where the national collections were concerned. A mining magnate calmly asked us £40,000 for what had cost him £10,000 five years earlier, as I happened to know. A peer, much in the

public eye and the Divorce Court, left a portrait with us, for sale: then, so soon as we had identified it with a famous historical personage, took it off to Christie's. There, however, it looked rather insignificant, and through our staunch ally, Mr. Ernest Leggatt, we succeeded in getting it for exactly one-quarter of the price which we had intended to offer the owner.

Rather later we had a further lesson; this time from a venerable Duke. On a certain Friday, Milner and I were asked to lunch, to be shown the pictures. Among them was one bearing a very great name; it was really an important specimen of a less famous master. When asked about its quality and value, I was promised, as usual, that if ever it came to be sold, the Nation should have the first refusal. On that condition I gave the noble owner the correct name and a generous valuation. On the Monday following I happened to meet a well-known dealer in the street. He stopped me and said, 'Oh, the Duke of — has just offered me his picture, saying you valued it at £12,000. Do you really think it is worth quite so much?' Humbler folk could generally be trusted, and the much-abused dealer almost invariably.

Public affairs now began to cast a grave shadow upon both private and official activities. A crowded, brilliant reception in Downing Street brought us within sight and hearing of personages whose names were become household words, in connexion with the Marconi scandal. At Euston, when about to start for the wedding of my school-fellow Peel, much pleased that he should have remembered me after so many years, I saw poor Lord Weardale, most genial of Trustees, banged on the head by a furious suffragette who had mistaken him for Mr. Asquith. Then came the mutilation of the 'Rokeby Velazquez' in the National Gallery. We had to close the Portrait Gallery for a fortnight, to consider measures of precaution and defence, to hang the best pictures out of harm's way and to protect small works with Triplex glass. Other troubles are sug-

gested by a note-book entry of March 30th :—‘Resignation of French, etc. Asquith War Minister. Burned my clothes with pipe.’ Further suffragette warnings came in May, glasses being smashed in the National Gallery. Finally in July, while we all were wondering what would happen next in Ireland, our portrait of Carlyle by Millais was attacked. A plucky student, Miss Mimpriss, and Wilson, now Head Attendant at the Gallery, seized the woman and prevented further damage. Then, just a week after we had attended the trial of the case at Bow Street, Austria declared war on Serbia.

The action of Germany at this moment came to me as a complete surprise. In the past I had often done business with Germans, and found them both honest and pre-eminently sensible. That their feeling towards us might be changing had been indicated two years before, at a lunch with F. R. Martin, where I met the afterwards famous Von Kühlmann, Councillor of their London Embassy. When inquiring about affairs in England, Von Kühlmann took such evident satisfaction in each sign of our national weakness or divided counsels as to prove him less hostile than contemptuous. That contempt we seemed to have been steadily earning ever since. The crisis over the House of Lords, Labour unrest, financial laxity, fashionable extravagance, the suffragette agitation, the menace of both mutiny and civil war in Ireland, all these pointed to the automatic and speedy decline of Britain, if only the warring parties were left alone to cut each other’s throats. Germany, now at the height of her commercial prosperity and armed to the teeth, would in that case succeed, without effort or serious interference, to the leadership of the world.

It seemed incredible that a nation so sensible, far-seeing and well-informed, as I believed Germany to be, could fail to recognize that everything was to be gained by waiting, at least until our internal troubles had come to a head. Even the pleasant and friendly Prince Lichnowsky was just the Ambassador whom a subtle government would choose

to maintain the appearance of disinterested friendship until it was time to unmask. Stunned by the premature outburst, I quite failed to see in the *hubris* which scorned our futile efforts for peace an example, on a colossal scale, of the one sin which the gods never seem to overlook; though their punishment is apt to be painfully slow in coming, and to sacrifice a needless number of innocents along with the culprit. But that is quite in the best tragic tradition.

So bemused were we, that we failed also to see that this war meant the shelving, if not the destruction, of all that we had tried to do to improve and to popularize the Gallery. We actually continued for several months to discuss, and to complete, the plans for an immediate extension of our building by the Office of Works. Funds for this extension had been obtained from the Treasury with the utmost difficulty: we had soon to abandon all hope of seeing the work carried out. The dangers of attack from the air became the paramount concern. To meet them we constructed 'bomb-proofs,' of a sort, in our basements, where, protected by huge barriers of sandbags, by wire netting to catch splinters, by half-walled-up doorways to prevent flooding, and by attendants constantly practised in fire-drill, all the more precious and portable pictures in the collection might lie safe from anything but a direct hit. The engineering problem was rather fun: not so all the human problems connected with it. The quiet guardianship of our happy willing staff came to an end. Metamorphosed into squads of special constables, incessantly inspected and drilled, on duty night and day, the attendants had troubles of their own, for their paymasters failed at first to see that abnormal hours of service involved abnormal expenses for men whose homes were miles away in the suburbs.

When all this was happily settled, at the end of 1915, an invasion from Whitehall called for fresh upheavals. To help to relieve the congestion caused by the forming of new Departments, the Trustees consented to lend the Gallery to the Office of Works for the use of the Separation Allow-

ances department; obtaining, in virtue of their voluntary surrender, terms of the very best. Smoking was, of course, absolutely forbidden, indeed so completely was the Gallery safeguarded in every detail, that we had, in a few weeks, to receive, and somehow to satisfy, a deputation from the lady clerks, praying for a place where they might boil their tea-kettles.

On the declaration of war I had placed myself immediately at the disposal of the Treasury. Since my Lords had no immediate use for me, I followed the lead of Binyon and Hind by joining the Volunteer Civil Force. The aim of this body was to provide a sort of auxiliary Police Reserve. At the Headquarters in Rochester Row, our oddly assorted company gathered and drilled, practising shooting in its spare time with '22 rifles and revolvers. The rabbits at Langton Field had made the former weapon familiar. The revolver was a novelty; ammunition was cheap, and the example of Milner, a good revolver-shot, stimulated my practice. Over my drilling I was less happy. I could not recover the stick-fed smartness of my Canterbury days; yet for our quaint evolutions in and about Vincent Square I soon had reason to be thankful.

Lord Dillon, indignant at being rejected as a recruit on account of his seventy years, and my friend Charles Foulkes, then a C.P.O. in the R.N.V.R., introduced me to that service, in which I enrolled as A.B. for Anti-Aircraft work. Being allotted to a searchlight squad on the roof of the Goods Station at Nine Elms, from which it was practically impossible to get home in the small hours, I was very kindly provided by Charles Aitken with a bed in the Tate Gallery basement, and hot cocoa. On our airy platform, the frost and bitter wind could be met with Bovril, rum and duplicate sweaters; the cold, the darkness and the monotonous vigilance being occasionally relieved by night alarms, or combined effects of searchlight, snow and lightning. Our old-fashioned oxycalcium light needed careful watching; otherwise there was little that called for more than common



patience, except the occasional contempt of some young *embusqué* for a senior. Harrison, secretary of the Royal Society, was my particular chum on the station. In years he must almost have rivalled Sydney Glover, once on my staff at the 'Burlington Magazine,' who enlisted at the age of fifty-nine, fought in the Dardanelles and gained a commission.

In January 1915 I was one of those detailed for special service at Sandringham, with gunners from the R.H.A. and a detachment of Guards, during the King's visit. Owing to some misunderstanding no quarters were available when we arrived. I found rather a comic billet with some breeders of champion pigs, the best part of their cottage being crammed nearly to the ceiling with the prizes they had won, from a piano to a hip-bath. Unluckily all they could find to eat was a scrap of cold bacon and a little bread: the village shop had been cleaned right out. Next day, however, the King provided us with a noble mess at the West Newton Club; Mr. Gallagher, the vicar, proved a paragon of hospitality, and the Misses Wolfe sallied out in the bitter night bringing cocoa and cigarettes to the sentry at Sandringham Church.

When the time came for his two hours' relief, that sentry turned out of the cold into the gunners' crowded tent, lay down in the mud by the tent flap (where some kind neighbour might spread a wet, filthy blanket over his legs), dropped fast asleep at once, feeling as warm as toast, and caught neither rheumatism nor even a common cold. The gunners were less lucky; five of them died of pneumonia. My opposite number among the gunner sentries was rather a dear youth. We used to extend our beats as the night drew on, till we could exchange a word and a cigarette. Only once did I feel a qualm in his company. We were out for a walk together, and he suggested that we might brighten existence by 'picking up' a girl; a search which I managed to divert towards a little public-house, and to finish in cold, watery beer.

The senior service had to keep its end up in the presence of the army, so, in the intervals of night duty, we were marched off to remote corners behind woods, to be drilled, and drilled, and drilled by our indefatigable commander, Lieutenant Pink. Charging with the bayonet was the thing in which I failed worst, puffing a hundred yards behind my long-legged juniors. Our second-in-command knew more of novel-writing than of practical drill. He was marching us back in fours when the track, and our progress, was stopped by a wicket-gate. We solemnly marked time in front of it, awaiting the order 'Form two deep' and its sequel. There was a long pause, and then 'Halt! Dismiss!' It was a good thing none of the Guards were about. We had been held up to them (they were young recruits) as models by their Colonel.

The King came to inspect our ramshackle searchlight, which chose that precise moment for casting off an essential supply tube from its nozzle. In consequence I had to greet His Majesty with my hinder parts, as I knelt on the lorry floor, holding the connexion together with my hands, and praying that my comfortable brown boots, hastily blacked over a week before in view of this expedition, should not catch his professional eye.

At the very last moment I came nearer still to ruining our reputation. We had to march to Wolferton early on a black rainy morning. I had just got ready, when one of the pests of billets caught me by the calf. Unshipping the essential garments, I dealt with the intruder, by the light of a guttering candle-stump, and rushed off to the rendezvous. As we slung along the road, the dawn slowly came, and revealed that I was wearing only one gaiter. And there was to be a parade at the station, for the Guards Colonel, before we entrained! Shifted, for concealment, into the rear rank, I awaited the event in terror. Fortunately we produced an extra 'slap-up' 'Present Arms!'; even Pink was pleased, and when all was over, his chauffeur, beckoning from his car, produced the missing gaiter. My practical host had

found it and run round with it to headquarters. Bless him and his pigs!

At the end of March the R.N.A.S. was reorganized, but the new conditions of service were so wholly incompatible with any work at the Gallery that I had to take my discharge. Never, for many years, had I felt so thoroughly hard and fit. After this bout of exercise in winter weather, the long, heavy, old-fashioned rifle served out to us weighed no more than a light twelve-bore; a route-march of a dozen miles in the mud, after a whole night on sentry duty, left one densely stupid but not over-tired; aches and pains, internal or external, were almost unknown; lying down on a bed and getting a hot bath became extraordinary pleasures. Before that time I never had a hot bath in the morning: I have never enjoyed a cold one since.

To help the various War charities, I was now permitted by my Trustees to give 'opinions' on pictures for a fee, and so made one or two hundred pounds for the Officers' Families Fund, and/or any other similar causes which my clients might wish to benefit. Belgian refugees set other problems. My wife was particularly horrified by the story of the little girl whose hands had been cut off, and insisted on adopting this poor victim of the German advance. The Relief Committee set to work to trace her and bring her to us, and then discovered, to my intense relief, that she resembled the Russian troop-trains.

In November 1914 I crossed to Dublin, to deliver the Hermione Lectures at Alexandra College. Under a drizzle, which lasted the whole week of my stay, the city looked squalid and bedraggled. But the traditional Irish hospitality was unchanged. At Alexandra College I met Dermot O'Brien, 'George A. Birmingham,' and Maurice Headlam of the Treasury, who knew me by having acquired my Eton arm-chair. The Duncans, of the Modern Gallery (she hoped, I think, to make a proselyte for Ireland, he was a delightful Gallio), entertained me royally, and introduced me to the Abbey Theatre, where I met W. B. Yeats. Having

admired his poems ever since I first read them, in Henley's 'Scots Observer,' I was delighted to find him not only a poet, but one of the most practical of men; a patriot but no wild optimist, who foresaw no permanent future for his native island. Any established government, however completely Irish, would always throw up a rebellious minority, to oppose it, to destroy it, and to be itself destroyed after securing power.

'The Book of Kells' seemed so marvellous that I trembled, during the subsequent siege of the place, lest a chance shell or outbreak of fire should destroy this miracle of a vanished Irish monastic refinement. The mediaeval antiquities, too, were most impressive, so was the Poussin *Entombment* in the Gallery, where I spent many hours making notes and sketching portraits. At first I could not get a likeness. The Irish facial proportions were quite different from the English, and needed a different thumb-nail formula. In the true native type, the broad nostrils come in the middle of the face, the upper lip is immense, the jaw and cheek-bones broad, the forehead low, as of some race, pre-Celtic, aboriginal, almost anthropoid.

After paying a duty call at the grave of Swift with its grim epitaph, I came back, sketching from the boat and the train as my custom was. In consequence I was arrested at Euston as a spy, and could not convince a persistent detective and stolid railway officials of my harmless identity. In vain did I produce letters and cards; in vain did I ask them to telephone to Vine Street, where Superintendent Sutherland was a personal friend. The spy-fever was at its height, and only the exhumation from the very bottom of my kit-bag of lantern-slides, lecture notes, and the Dublin Press notices of them, at last induced my captors to let me go.

About this time I was urged by one or two influential friends to put my name down for the Royal Academy. I felt bound to decline, since election (had it ever taken place) might have prejudiced my claim to impartiality, at a time

when the Chantrey Bequest was still an incompletely settled problem. *Gimmerton Churchyard*, exhibited in the spring of 1915, excited Clutton-Brock, who discovered it to be 'exactly like *Wuthering Heights*,' without realizing that the novel was its 'onlie begetter.' It is now in Lord Blanesburgh's collection. Lectures on Michelangelo and Raphael at the Royal Institution, with the making of two tiny portrait-books for Lee-Warner, 'The Great Victorians' and 'The Great Elizabethans,' were other outside activities: Mestrovic at South Kensington provided the great artistic impression—a Michelangelo, of another race, who made Alfred Stevens look like an eclectic, and Rodin like a Parisian.

A children's fancy-dress dance and supper in January 1916 entailed the setting out of all our little store of silver and plate, which was neatly cleared off in the small hours by a burglar, together with my poor Chinese bronzes. Nothing was insured. But in March an illustration in a picture-paper revealed the bronzes as part of the loot discovered in a thieves' 'treasure house' at Chiswick, and we actually got back everything, except two salt-spoons which our honest parlour-maid could not positively identify. The Burlington Fine Arts Club was about to hold a Chinese Exhibition, and asked for the loan of the stolen bronzes, but did not require them, since the archaic specimens from recent Chinese excavations, which they were able to exhibit for the first time, were vastly superior in quality and beauty to almost everything with which collectors had previously been content.

My fishing on the Windrush and the Colne in 1915 had been rather successful. My single day on the former river in 1916 was a total blank; a gale lashed the water into waves which not even the smallest chub could face. The blank, however (as at Hawes in 1909), proved the forerunner of things totally unexpected.

Intercourse with my colleagues at the National Gallery over questions of finance, administration and plans for our

extension on the St. George's Barracks site, had been constant and friendly. As Holroyd's troubles increased and his health declined, our relations became more and more intimate. His difficulties over the exhibition of the Lane pictures, his anxiety about the Masaccio *Madonna* and other contested purchases, now took me almost every day to Trafalgar Square for some informal consultation. Though Holroyd himself kept honourable silence, it was impossible not to be aware that matters were handled there with little consideration for his views or feelings. The tears which I once surprised in the Director's eyes, as he came out from the Board Room, were further evidence that all was not well with him, or with the place. His term of office would expire in the summer of 1916; the state of his heart already made continuous exertion impossible, and gossip as to his successor began, as usual, to be bandied about.

My work took me frequently to the Treasury, and having not the least desire to put my head into the lion's den next door, I told my lords and masters plainly that I was not a candidate for the vacancy. I replied to a second inquiry by recommending the head of another institution, as the most suitable man (so indeed he was) for handling difficult personages and artistic problems. Then this very man, my chosen candidate, came to see me. A huge offer, it appeared, had been made for the famous Titians at Bridgewater House: only by raising an equivalent or greater sum could they be saved for England. His solution was to stand aside himself, and press for the appointment as Director of a business man, a friend of us both, whose ability in worldly matters ranked high, and who was genuinely interested in art. Though neither a painter nor a trained critic, his deficiencies in technical knowledge could be made up by the speaker, or by me, since I worked next door.

This proposal to sacrifice scholarship to expediency—to a momentary crisis which might pass (as it soon did pass)—was so contrary to the sound principles of Gallery management upon which we had all been agreed and eloquent for

years, that I was profoundly shocked, and said so, I fear, with some heat. The Board at Trafalgar Square, without the direction of assured critical knowledge, would inevitably remain amateurish, hesitating and ineffective. Yet, if I could not, on principle, approve the scheme, I would not, from friendship, oppose it. Having no axe of my own to grind, I at once wrote semi-officially, to the Treasury, reiterating my decision not to be a candidate. What others might do was no concern of mine. Claude Phillips was, doubtless, too old for the appointment; Roger Fry, drenched by Post-Impressionism and immersed in his Omega business, now seemed, by general consent, to be out of the running; but Ricketts, Cockerell, Martin Conway and Whitworth Wallis all appeared to be men who, in their very different ways, might be able to work with the National Gallery Trustees and guide them sensibly.

Meanwhile the Bridgewater peril was considered at conferences between Lords Curzon, Lansdowne and Plymouth, with Ricketts, Witt and MacColl. We agreed that the most hopeful defence would be to raise a capital sum, by selling some of the 'duplicate' Dutch pictures at Trafalgar Square and part of our immense collection of works by Turner. The necessary powers would have to be got by a Parliamentary Bill; the necessary schedules and valuations were prepared by Ricketts and myself. This experience confirmed my belief that Ricketts was really about the best man now left available for the National Gallery. His acute connoisseurship, his ready wit, even his little affectations of manner, would have forced attention and carried weight with the Trustees, while the 'splendidly efficient' Collins Baker, as Keeper and Secretary, would have saved him from the worst of the routine work. Other claims, however, were being put forward, so I had to keep my preferences to myself and let events take their course, occasional impatience to put in a word being restrained by the wise counsel of Milner, Collins Baker and Harold Child.

One July afternoon, Lord Ribblesdale appeared in the

Board Room of the Portrait Gallery. Though always friendly, his fine presence and curt, sudden humour rendered him slightly formidable as a Trustee, and called for caution in any exchange of words. His ostensible business was a picture of Lunardi and his balloon. That done with, he sat, nonchalant, on a corner of the big table, and asked me why I was not a candidate for the National Gallery. He was not alone in wishing to know my reasons for standing aside. I gave them with equal frankness. I was very happy indeed at the Portrait Gallery; I should not be so, in existing conditions, at Trafalgar Square, as he would realize. Moreover, I did not wish to stand in the way of any friend. If one candidate did not satisfy the Prime Minister, as he seemed to imply, there were other good men to choose from. I named several, but without making much apparent impression. At last he went off, telling me to think it over again.

Just a week later, when I was alone and about to leave the Gallery, he marched in (no sauntering this time) and went straight to the point. The Prime Minister, being a scholar himself, wished to know why a scholar should be unwilling to consider such a post as the Directorship. Since I had not taken the hint he had given me on the previous Monday, he had now to order me to put in writing my reasons for declining to apply, and to send them to him that evening in the form of a letter. I could speak quite openly; my confidence would be respected.

Naturally flattered, and horribly embarrassed, I sat down, when he had gone, to express my present happiness, my doubts and fears about the other Board (Holroyd's tears could not be forgotten), the claims of other candidates and the improbability of my getting all the support from above which I thought the Director needed. Feeling, however, that some consideration was due to those who had paid me the compliment of inquiry, I added, 'But if the powers that be thought me really the best man for a very difficult job, and gave me the backing it requires, these hesitations would



not count: I would accept the post, and should hope in time to derive some amusement from it.'

I was mistaken in thinking that the impudence of the closing words might save me, at the cost of my reputation for good sense, from the perilous honour. Three days later a telephone message from Downing Street told me that I was appointed. 'Should I have the full support of Downing Street and the Treasury?' 'Yes.' There was nothing for it but thanks and acceptance, on that understanding.

The next morning I had to travel to Lancashire, for the wedding of my cousin, Adela Dickson, at Garstang. Our host for the occasion was my old friend the Rev. John Wilson ('Willy') Pedder, angling mentor of boyhood, pioneer of the Windrush, and owner of Bortree Tarn near Lakeside, where I had meditated over the ways of pike and perch. After breakfast on Saturday, another old fisherman friend, the gardener William, produced the very bamboo pole we had used there thirty years before, with a tin of worms, and down I went once again to the turbid Wyre. At a familiar corner I caught neither trout nor sea-trout, but a gudgeon, a fluke, a large minnow and a small eel, while a rival angler on the opposite bank got a quarter-pound chub. When, in due course, we reached the church, a beaming uncle appeared to congratulate me; the National Gallery appointment had been announced in the 'Times' that morning. Feeling that the thing was no certainty until conditions had been agreed, I had said little or nothing about recent events except to my wife. She, with her wonted practical sense, warned me on no account to exchange my permanency as a Civil Servant for a temporary post however distinguished.

And at Downing Street, on the following (Sunday) morning, I found that the conditions were not agreed; far from it. The Treasury next day were equally dubious on the financial question. So I stayed at the Portrait Gallery while the discussions went on, answering, it is true, the current queries from Trafalgar Square and countless letters of congratulation, but anticipating all the time that a withdrawal

of the announcement would be needed. At the end of ten days, it was settled that I should retain my rights as a Civil Servant, so that I should not be liable to dismissal at the end of five years; also that the Trafalgar Square Board should be leavened by the immediate appointment of our friend Witt as a Trustee. But any administrative reform, even an improvement in the Director's powers of purchase, was not to be had.

I therefore declined the appointment, and said I would stay at the Portrait Gallery. Downing Street smiled: 'That is impossible now. The door is closed. We have just offered the Directorship to Milner.' And when I got back gloomily to the Board Room, there, sure enough, stood a blushing Milner, and a laughing Lord Dillon who greeted me with 'It's no good: you can't get out of it.' Milner, like the noble fellow he was, seeing my rueful face, at once said he would decline promotion if I really wished to stay. But the die was cast; and pleasure in Milner's succession (which I feared the authorities would never approve) prevented me from worrying over-much about my failure to escape, or to reform, Trafalgar Square.

Lord Dillon told me afterwards that Lord Ribblesdale had called to see him about my appointment, and spoke so warmly of his interest in me and my future that, said Lord Dillon, 'I felt I had never really known him before or seen him to such advantage.' When I had a chance of thanking Lord Ribblesdale, I felt bound to apologize for the flippant ending of that fatal letter. 'Not at all,' said he. 'When that was read out, they all exclaimed, "Why, this is the man for us."'

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE NATIONAL GALLERY (i)

(1916-1918)

Gallery troubles; first Board Meetings; Lord Curzon and Lord Plymouth; Parliamentary Bills; the Lane Bequest; a dinner-party; spiritualism; air-raids; loan of a Tube station; an outrage; designs for war medals; war pictures; Bellini's *Bacchanal* and other paintings; the Degas Sale in Paris; Arnold Bennett and Lord Curzon; Lord Lansdowne elected Chairman.

My fate had been decided on August 2nd, but there were many things to be cleared up at the Portrait Gallery, many to be considered at the National Gallery, so for five days I lived between the two places, a harried amphibian. The first sight of the Director's room at Trafalgar Square caused my heart to sink. Neglected and forlorn, with bare, discoloured walls, a tattered carpet as dirty as the floor, a few odd bits of shabby lodging-house furniture, and the frowsy camp-bed on which poor Holroyd used to rest, the place made a pitiable contrast to the comfort, the dignity, of the Board Room I was leaving. Summoning, therefore, all my courage, the stout Head Attendant, the ladylike House-keeper, and the Office of Works, I demanded a clearance, cleanliness and appropriate furniture, settling myself meanwhile in the room of the absent Collins Baker to deal with the countless things which called for immediate attention.

First came the drafting of the two Bills empowering the Trustees to sell 'redundant' Turners and other pictures. These had to be discussed with the Parliamentary draftsman, Sir F. F. Liddell, at the Treasury; each verbal emendation being reported to Lord Curzon and others. The geography of the upper floor of the building, occupied partly by second-rate pictures, partly by Admiralty clerks, was already

familiar, but the vast subterranean labyrinths, in which the more precious things were stacked, needed hours of grimy exploration. Then Ambrose, the veteran clerk who had served with Burton and Wornum and the younger Eastlake, would produce documents bearing on past Directors' difficulties, as a pleasing intimation of the treatment I might expect. Mr. J. P. Heseltine would call and gossip for hours; Mr. Benson would come, apparently to find out how in the world I had got myself appointed, while down in the repairing-room lay our famous Palma-Titian portrait of *A Poet*, a sorry spectacle, a mere skin of blistered paint. Having been successfully detached from its old canvas, it had now refused three times to stick to a new one, and was, as a last desperate resource, about to be pressed on to a panel. In addition, I had to deal single-handed with every kind of letter, question and visitor, to report on pictures at Christie's and at Agnew's for various Trustees, and to see how the whole Layard Collection, just received, could be stored, put in order and provisionally catalogued. When, at the end of a week, I went up for my Civil Service medical examination, the doctor at first would not pass me. Only when I had stripped to the skin did he decide that I might stay the course. A few days later, when Collins Baker was coming back from leave, I escaped to Appleby for a month of bad, stormy fishing.

Though Collins Baker was less optimistic, I looked forward without much apprehension to my first Board Meeting. Such Trustees as I had met had shown themselves polite, if not friendly, and I trusted that my experience at the Portrait Gallery would carry us through safely. Being a bit of a precisian, I was chiefly anxious to find out how much the Director was really allowed to do. By what self-imposed limits was the Board accustomed to modify the terms of Lord Rosebery's Minute of 1894? Under it the Director seemed liable to complete suppression at any moment, or in any connexion, by a majority vote. My first three Board Meetings were to settle this question, and to establish the

pleasant working relations which lasted almost to the end of Lord Curzon's life, and of this humble narrative; but the settlement was not effected without some rather amazing preludes.

At this point Truth and Charity, my twin stretcher-bearers, threaten to break step, casting uneasy glances as Justice, her balances clanging, moves firmly to the side of the one, while Propriety, finger on official lip, takes the other's arm. 'What a chance!' twitters the shade of Trollope; from afar a bleeding victim cries, 'No weakness!' 'You dare to threaten us?' growls the Wolf to the Lamb. The clash of thought recalls the hermit of Rapallo. What would his maxim be? 'Soyez tranquille,' perhaps? After all, a short quotation from evidence given before the Royal Commission in 1928 will summarize the facts; one or two paragraphs will indicate the atmospheric environment,<sup>1</sup> and that is enough for History.

'At the National Portrait Gallery the Director was a professional adviser to the Board, an administrator of the Gallery, whom the Trustees united to help and encourage. At Trafalgar Square his opinion seemed neither to be asked nor expected. As the controversies between Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Poynter were on record, and as the breakdown of Sir Charles Holroyd under the system had just occurred, I saw that this attitude was not personal to myself, but was the tradition of the place. Lord Plymouth acted as mediator in the discussions which ensued, and an assurance was obtained from Lord Curzon that in 99 per cent. of the technical matters discussed the Board would accept the Director's opinion.'

<sup>1</sup> It has been suggested in more than one quarter, and not merely in jest, that some unquiet spirit, some aura of Discord, some emanation, perhaps, of ancient conflict, haunts the National Gallery; that it can be exorcized by a good and brave man, like Lord Plymouth; and that it can return when the salutary influence is withdrawn. I am no believer in such objective psychic invasions. Yet there must be something queer about the place. Only a few months ago I learned the experience of a most distinguished Trustee, a veteran *maître d'armes* of debate, a leader in every grave political contest for twenty years or more. Not one of his major activities took so much out of him as a Board Meeting at Trafalgar Square.

If only the Commission of 1928 could have put Lord Curzon's eirenicon into formal shape, as I urged them to do, it would have solved the chief problem of the Gallery in the simplest possible manner. And Lord Curzon deserves credit both for introducing it at a time when the Director's very existence was being studiously ignored, and for keeping to it afterwards, at the cost, I am sure, of some internal qualms.

Lord Plymouth's mediation was no less timely, courageous and effective. Since the Trustees had not been consulted about my appointment, the Minute recording it was naturally unpopular. Baker was severely reprimanded for interpreting it correctly; two Ministers were deputed to obtain its rescission from Mr. Asquith. 'And if, Mr. Holmes,' added one noble neighbour, 'the Prime Minister, as we anticipate, accepts our view of the matter, your friends at the Treasury will doubtless be able to provide you with some other occupation.'

The deputation was unsuccessful. Hoping to prevent the reopening of a dangerous topic, I rashly put in, 'Surely it's a case of *solvuntur risu tabulae*? Couldn't we now get on with our real business?'; forgetting, in my haste, the sting in the Horatian context. Lord Curzon, sitting opposite, turned full red; then the corners of his mouth lifted and twitched; he was suppressing a laugh at his own expense. He had proved himself a man to respect, possibly even to like.

Baker now pointed out, with equal courage and dignity, that his own humiliation had been no solitary injustice: 'it would hardly be too much to say that the breakdown of the late Director's health was due to what might be termed the electrical atmosphere of this Board Room.' Protests, denials, excuses followed, till an appeal was made to Lord Plymouth. That honest gentleman, much embarrassed, replied that there was only too much truth in what had been said as to the way in which the late Director had felt his treatment by the Board. 'And since you have appealed to me,' he concluded, 'let me entreat the Board that this may be the last of these deplorable scenes.' To that there could

be no reply, and the proceedings ended quietly. Lord Plymouth's intercession had done its work. The moral effect of it lasted for some time after his untimely death, and the first of my volumes on the National Gallery is dedicated to his memory, for, without the confidence and good feeling which his presence introduced, the activities of the place during the next five years must have been sadly cramped. His share in the work of reconstruction deserves to rank with, if not above, Lord Curzon's.

So surprising were these debates that I followed them spell-bound, with a little anxiety, much sympathy for my colleague, and then with complete political disillusion. For I was a Conservative born and bred, nurtured upon the solid old 'Standard,' confirmed in my faith by intercourse with the great gentlemen at the Portrait Gallery. Now, in a flash, I saw what years of provocation must have led up to the Parliament Act. My titular idols had revealed feet of rather ugly clay, and were clearly no objects for veneration. Common sense forbade any transfer to the narrowing tabernacles of Liberalism. To plunge into the froth of Socialism was absurd. A Conservative, of sorts, I must remain; but a devotee no longer. It was just as well, perhaps; a Civil Servant has no business with party politics.

In fairness to the Board, it must be added that the circumstances were exceptional. The War just then was imposing a heavy strain upon everyone, particularly upon those in great positions. My unexpected appointment doubtless upset some calculations; the memory of ancient criticisms of the Gallery in the 'Burlington Magazine' may still have rankled; certain recent Press notices, hailing my appearance as a presage of reform, may have roused further suspicion:—any or all of these causes would tend to aggravate the traditional practice of keeping the Director rather more strictly in his place than was the custom elsewhere. Altogether, in obtaining almost immediate freedom from the chief of our disabilities without incurring much ill-will, we were uncommonly lucky.



C H COLLINS BAKER, 1932  
After a drawing by Francis Dodd, R A





We had anyhow little time for worrying: current affairs kept us too busy. Baker's unselfish energy relieved me of more than half my labours; his dry, affectionate humour lightened all the rest, instinctive friendship being cemented by our common danger. Now that Montague House, Grosvenor House and Bridgewater House were being evacuated, for use as extra Government offices, the valuation, reception and storage of a large part of their pictorial contents interfered considerably with our work on the Layard Collection, and other business proper to the Gallery. The Bridgewater pictures gave us the most trouble, since one of them developed blisters when transferred to our cellars, and the resultant claim for compensation had to be argued and settled with the Office of Works. Such technical questions, indeed, are best settled out of court. About this time the pleadings of a famous counsel in another claim, with which we were indirectly concerned, proved so strangely at issue with his client's interest that they were referred by the solicitor to a higher authority. 'Was he drunk?' promptly asked the latter. 'No, it was only eleven in the morning,' was the solicitor's reply. But the expensive result had to be accepted in silence; the offender was too eminent for open protest.

The Trustees, meanwhile, were embarrassed by a staring portrait of Lord Kitchener ('the most over-rated man of our time' one strong dissident dared to say), which they were ultimately compelled by outside pressure to accept for exhibition, in defiance of all precedent. Then, with Sir Cecil Smith and G. F. Hill, I was engaged for some two years in settling competitions or designs for the Scroll and Plaque presented to the Next-of-Kin to the Fallen, and for the various war medals and badges. Our little triumvirate worked in such perfect harmony that the only trials to our patience came when well-considered plans were patched and mutilated by semi-public or official committees.

The immediate nightmare, however, was our Parliamentary Bill. To sell pictures which the Nation really could

spare, in order to be able to buy the pictures which ought to remain in England, was sound enough in theory. But in practice it was difficult to carry any such idea to an effective conclusion without seeming to encroach upon the rights of testators, a point on which my friend Claude Phillips, and his chief Lord Burnham, displayed uncompromising hostility. Lord D'Abernon was to introduce the Bill in the House of Lords. My preparation of the notes for his speech, at the cost of infinite labour, corrections and talk, resulted in such a sequence of commonplaces that he, very sensibly, discarded them all in favour of his own native powers of persuasion.

Baker and I were naturally admitted to hear the debate. The vigour of expression which we had found so hard to endure was not, it appeared, a monopoly of our Board Room. Lord Burnham, leading the Opposition with no little spirit and eloquence, received a dressing-down from Lord Curzon which made everybody smile, but was not calculated to reconcile one whose command of publicity rendered him really formidable. Personally, I picked up sundry useful periphrases and Parliamentary turns of speech, which afterwards made an invaluable jam for conveying the powder of crude fact to my dignified colleagues. The easy monosyllables of the Portrait Gallery style had evidently been too familiar, too lacking in respect for a different place and very different persons.

At this time the first symptoms of trouble over Sir Hugh Lane's Bequest began to show. Sir Joseph Duveen's gift of a modern Foreign Gallery, by fulfilling the conditions of Lane's will, had made the legal position safe for England. Lane's friends and relatives, however, maintained that Dublin had been his true love to the end, and that his real wishes would not be carried out unless London ceded his French pictures to the city which had flouted him. His aunt, Lady Gregory, put the case to Lord Curzon, who came one day to the Gallery to dictate a reply. Presently he embarked upon a paragraph of some complexity. Our

gentle, willing typist, pausing in her shorthand, looked up at him, pink and doubtful. Lord Curzon repeated his period. Miss Ruse listened, blushed scarlet and finally ejaculated, 'Please, Lord Curzon, it isn't grammar.' I hastened to explain that it was a dependent sentence and quite correct, while Lord Curzon sat back and rocked with laughter.

My most interesting social experience was an evening at Lord D'Abernon's, at Foley House, a day or two after Mr. Lloyd George had succeeded Mr. Asquith as Prime Minister. Mrs. Asquith happened to be my neighbour at dinner, and the qualities to which she owed her exceptional fascination quickly became evident. The brilliance of her talk was only equalled by its transparent candour. In half-an-hour I had learned more about Downing Street realities than in all the rest of my life. One point which struck me was the immense influence then wielded by the popular Press. Mr. Asquith, immersed in affairs, had avoided revealing himself to Pressmen. Mr. Lloyd George, by taking them into his confidence, had won their hearts. Speaking of courage, Mrs. Asquith said that the bravest man she had ever met was 'Mr. McKenna over there,' and she looked across the table. When refusing to cut down the Naval Estimates some years before, and thereby immensely strengthening our forces for the present emergency, he had dared to face not only popular clamour, but his party and his friends. The sympathies of the company being generally Asquithian, banter and legends about his rival were freely exchanged. One biting summary, attributed to Lord Morley, I still recall: 'As a friend, Brutus; as an orator, Ananias; as a man of business, ask Marconi.' The charm and beauty of my hostess and Mrs. McKenna dispelled in time these rather acrid political vapours, and ended delightfully an entertainment which for a novice had been almost too exciting.

'Raymond,' by Sir Oliver Lodge, had become the book of the moment. Many who would not in normal times have listened to any such testimony, felt that the merest chance of communicating with those whom they had recently lost

ought not to be missed. 'Sludge, the Medium' was forgotten: 'The Road to Endor' was not yet in existence. Happening to call on Ricketts one evening at Lansdowne Road, I found that Edmund Dulac was expected. He and Yeats were attending a séance by one of Sir Oliver's most notable mediums, the one, I fancy, who held out hopes of spirit cigars and spirit whiskies-and-sodas in the world to come. Ricketts, himself a sceptic, was a little dubious as to what Dulac's reactions might be. But when that artist came, he promptly condemned the whole performance as quite second-rate. Yeats, it is true, had been rather impressed (they were supposed to be *incogniti*) by recognition, and by approbation of his latest book, but Dulac's identity appeared to cause the spirit some trouble. At last, 'I seem to hear a little voice "Ap-Ap-Ap-Apstein,"' was ventured. Dulac made no move, so the interview continued and ended under that decisive misapprehension.

So far the War had left us untouched, but its possibilities were brought home to us in January 1917 by a shock felt one evening in Trafalgar Square. It seemed as if a great bomb had dropped somewhere on the Horse Guards Parade, so close did the detonation sound, so palpably did the earth heave: and yet the explosion was at Silvertown, miles away. Recurrent shortages of coal and foodstuffs were further omens of trouble, and at times rather serious, as when, in that chilly spring, my wife and my two boys were all laid up with measles. No nurse, of course, could be had; our faithful Nannie was our one remaining maid, and had not a girl friend come to the rescue from Appleby we should have been in sore straits. The invalids were kept happy by constant reading aloud. After a time they became bored with all ordinary fiction; then stories of crime and sensation failed to stimulate. Only when, as a final resource, I procured them a copy of 'Dracula,' did they admit a stirring of the senses, and decide that it was time to get well.

A proposal now came from, or through, Sir Fabian Ware, that I should accept the Chairmanship of the Imperial War

Graves Commission. I felt bound to decline. Even if the Trustees and the Treasury would both approve, which was unlikely, such a widespread duplication of activities could not fail to involve some neglect of my duty to Trafalgar Square. Events, almost immediately, proved my renunciation to be right. The air-raids began in earnest, and, as the nearest resident to the Gallery, I had constantly to be on the spot. To be called up early in the small hours, to get somehow from Notting Hill to Trafalgar Square (it's a long, long way to run), was a nuisance. Yet I disliked the daylight raid of June 13th still more. I had to patrol the Gallery, among my cheerful old Service men with the fire-hoses, pretending not to be afraid as the Gothas droned overhead (one hadn't the fun of watching them), while the imagination persisted in thinking how the splinters of glass would fly if a bomb happened to drop among the pictures.

One afternoon, a few days later, I returned from wrestling with the Stores over our domestic sugar supply, to find that Sir Lionel Earle had called to tell the Keeper about the latest type of German bomb. Our cellars were bomb-proof no longer. I set to work upon velocity statistics from the Encyclopedia, and calculated that nothing short of burial forty feet down would be a protection against the new missiles. As Baker and I discussed the problem, we recalled glimpses of mysterious sidings seen when travelling by the Tube. Could some such place be found, and utilized? My friend Henry Oppenheimer was one of the great men of the Underground: we rang him up to inquire. He came to the Gallery at once; took us to the Headquarters of the Railway and introduced us to Mr. Burton, the Managing Director, who, before we left, made us the offer, on most generous terms, of the unused station in the Strand. We inspected it that evening. Sir Lionel Earle warmly approved the idea and, with his busy henchman Frank Baines, set about transforming the place into a perfect subterranean fortress. There, by January 18th 1918, to my intense relief, for the air-raiders were busy, some nine hundred of our best

pictures, with selected works from great private collections, the Portrait Gallery, and elsewhere, had found safe harbour. A section of the unfinished Post Office Tube was subsequently adapted, in similar fashion, to the needs of the other great museums.

Yet the lift to our deep asylum would not contain the largest pictures at Trafalgar Square. Some had simply to be walled up *in situ*; others could be rolled for travelling. Through the mediation of my uncle, Arthur Dickson, we secured from Lady Wantage the loan of Overstone Hall, near Northampton, to which Baker journeyed all through a dark January day with two immense picture-vans.

Lord D'Abernon kindly offered us the loan of his tennis-court at Esher Place as an alternative or supplement. While Baker and I were inspecting it, a telephone call from Ambrose announced an outrage in the Gallery. A soldier had damaged several pictures with a trenching-tool. Back we hurried, to find that evasion of active service was the apparent motive. Such an example might have a deplorable effect should it become public. Down went Baker to the War Office to settle procedure there, while I telephoned to the Police, the Home Office and the Press Censor, and notified Lord Curzon. To avoid the notoriety of a civil action, the man would have to be handed over by the Police to the Military Authorities for court-martial. Early the next morning the damaged pictures had been replaced by others, and the Trustees were hastily summoned by a confidential memorandum. 'Good heavens!' exclaimed one veteran (usually a model of cold, diplomatic prudence), 'I didn't realize it was confidential. I'm afraid I've been talking about it at the Club.'

All, however, went well. The Board did not disapprove; the culprit was quietly handed over to his regiment, court-martialled and packed off abroad; the club gossip led to nothing, as did the wonder of those who dreamed that they had seen an outrage, and Holder made a marvellous job of mending the damages. Indeed I can only identify the

focus of trouble upon Claude's *Embarkation of St. Ursula* by remembering how, in admiration of Holder's work, I asked him to let me take his brush and touch upon one small passage, so that I might have a private memento of his achievement. The lady's face in a picture by Ochtervelt is a similar *tour de force* of mending without repainting.

The repairs to the Claude necessarily involved removal of the old varnish, which had mellowed with years to a rich reddish-brown. The painting beneath proved to be as sharp, cool and vivid in tone as any modern work, so vivid that it was deemed inadvisable, at first, to show it on our walls. Even when we ultimately did so, the usual charges of over-cleaning and 'removal of the glazes' followed. Sir Aston Webb and several members of the Royal Academy were among the critics, but when, after failing to find a trace of the damaged portions, they saw the photograph of the picture before it was mended, they went quietly away. Now that the new mastic varnish has had time to mellow, nobody could guess what the picture's adventures have been. Except, perhaps, for a slight general increase in clarity and luminosity, it looks just the same as it did thirty years ago.

Almost all the activities of this war period were accompanied by some tension or confusion. Even normally peaceful bodies like the Walpole Society developed internal pains. I got vexed myself with the Red Cross Committee, and nearly quarrelled with my friend Baker. Impatient of all civilian duties while others were fighting, he set his heart upon going to the Front. In vain did I protest. He qualified as a motor driver, obtained the consent of the Board, and went off triumphant, only to return an hour or two later—rejected on medical grounds.

The Tate Gallery, too, turned militant. It had so long been kept under the heel of the National Gallery that the appointment in 1917 of a separate Board of Trustees, and other insignia of partial independence, led naturally to resilience. The Royal Academy was sharply challenged over the administration of the Chantrey Fund, and finally



brought to sanction something like the working compromise of to-day. Claims to absorb all our 'modern' foreign pictures, including Goya and Ingres, drove me to explosion, and to shelter behind my own Trustees from the masterful rapacity of my friends at Millbank. I admired, of course, all the time that I had to oppose. Only, perhaps, by asking for everything can a Director make sure of getting the greater part of what he requires, and those who to-day visit the Tate Gallery will see that the enthusiasm, or policy, of its second founders, MacColl and Aitken, has been completely justified.

With Cecil Smith and G. F. Hill, I continued to work in perfect harmony, though our little medallic triumvirate had occasional vigorous actions with other public or official committees. Only once did we nearly suffer a serious reverse, and that was at the War Office. The right was, mostly, on our side, the diplomacy all on theirs; and diplomacy would have won the day, had not the result of it been so plainly unworkable that we agreed to a friendly compromise. I have had a healthy respect for the War Office ever since. The Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, the Air Force, the Mercantile Marine, the Prisoners of War Helpers, and even the Neutrals, had all their separate medals or badges to be competed for and judged, apart from the Memorial Plaque. The competition for this Plaque, being open to everyone, including men on active service, brought hundreds of models to Trafalgar Square, of every size, and executed in every sort of material. The piles of them practically filled a whole cellar. These were gradually sifted to some two dozen, and from these the final three at last were chosen. We were repaid for our care, for the Select List of those who had shown promise in this first essay proved of great service when organizing more limited competitions. No supreme medallic genius emerged, yet the results, I think, were generally tolerable, and once, at least, in the Badge intended for Native Chieftains (it must be a numismatic rarity), quite charming.

Occasionally I slipped down to Walton to see Holroyd, now a complete invalid, and to keep him posted with the Gallery news. His last request, to hang our big Tintoretto, *Christ washing Peter's Feet*, over the stairs in the entrance hall, was carried out when the place was rearranged after the War. In November 1917 his gentle, much-enduring spirit found release from a world altogether too rough and exacting for it. A month or two later, he was followed to the grave by one of his chief critics, Mr. Alfred de Rothschild, long respected by the Board for his wealth, his masterful temper and his collection of pictures; from which they optimistically imagined that the Gallery would receive some very considerable benefit. I knew him only by repute, and by a message of approval which he once sent me from his sick-bed. His death therefore did not affect me as did those of Holroyd and of Robbie Ross, that delightful, witty gentleman, become conspicuous, through his loyalty to Oscar Wilde, as the very pattern of friendship and its unlucky victim.

At the instigation of Lee-Warner I made, during 1917, one or two utterly feeble essays in lithography, while continuing to paint at intervals. In spite of the hard times, some pictures and drawings got sold. Only one, however, is a distinct and pleasant memory. *Whernside*, shown at the New English Art Club in the winter of that year, found no purchaser at the time. Yielding to the general indifference, I put it aside and used it for some time as a drawing-board. Baker discovered it serving that humble purpose in 1923, when he was composing his little monograph on my work, and insisted on its resurrection. It was ultimately bought by Sir Evan Charteris, and presented by him to the Tate Gallery.

In April 1918, exhibitions of war paintings and drawings by Orpen, Rothenstein and Paul Nash indicated a desire of the authorities for similar propaganda, and I, among others, was invited to do something to illustrate our efforts in England. My original mission was abruptly cancelled:

the place had just blown up. Instead, I was sent to Sheffield and, before sketching at Vickers's, Hadfield's and other local centres, was taken over to Steel, Peech and Tozer's at Rotherham. There, after a glass of champagne in the office, I was escorted to see 'the view from the old tip.' A storm of rain blotted out the landscape, and we stumbled for shelter into a crowded platelayers' cabin on a railway embankment. The rain passed; we stepped out; and, lo! we were standing on the verge of the mysterious desert I had so long admired from the Midland Railway. Like a child admitted to some enchanted garden, I broke from my soldier-guide, to rush up and down the heaps of ashes, thrilled with excitement, sketching the forlorn ruins from every point of view, and accumulating a precious series of notes on this veritable Yorkshire Campagna. Once, in my absorption, I sat down on a boulder by the waterside, but jumped up again quickly; the lump of gray slag was burning-hot.

The material for my picture could not, unfortunately, be gathered in these romantic solitudes. The subject had to include some active industrial life, and I found it finally in a vast tangle of new girders and chimneys with a sluggish river below. In the actual painting this tangle was silhouetted against a clear sky, in Japanese fashion. To the supervising critic it appeared too Japanese: more realism was suggested, and introduced, with the result that the whole looks messy, photographic and feeble. At about the same time a second and smaller picture, recording a night alarm at Sandringham, was painted for the War Museum.

My wife's musical energies were naturally interrupted by the conditions of the time, and their effect upon the needs of growing children, but in January 1918 she composed and produced a little musical play on the 'Ali-Baba' theme, her first experiment, I think, in this vein. Our two boys with sundry school-fellows, one or two of whom have since made the stage their profession, gave us a lively performance;—a refreshing contrast to the solemnity of 'The Children of

Don,' the single opera I remember hearing during these years of anxiety.

Amusements, indeed, were few. Lord Ribblesdale asked me to Gisburne to see some of his pictures and, finding that I was a fisherman, insisted on my borrowing his outfit and going down to the Ribble. Engulfed in his huge brogues and waders I waddled thither with difficulty, but his Hardy rod was a dream. Never before or since have I handled such an exquisite weapon: it seemed to divine by instinct one's every thought.

A small sensation was caused by the report from our practical wood-expert, that a well-known fifteenth-century *Madonna and Child* was painted on a panel of American bass-wood or butternut. Since Berenson had made this picture one of the keystones in his reconstruction of Florentine art history, it was quietly withdrawn from exhibition. Berenson came from Italy in the autumn of 1918 to discuss it, but science required several years of repeated investigation before deciding that the wood was 450 years old and not 50. *The Macnab*, by Raeburn, next provided excitement. Lord Curzon hoped that Mrs. Ronald Greville would be able to buy it for the Nation: a gentleman from the North offered us £25,000 for it—and a baronetcy; Lord Dewar finally secured it for £24,300. It was no supreme loss. The old gentleman is not standing quite securely: a mere push would send him over.

Then came the news that Bellini's *Bacchanal* was actually sold and was at Sulley's in Bond Street. Having been freshly cleaned, it looked brilliant. Every detail showed clearly, and I was delighted to find, with a magnifying glass, that the inscription read proudly, JOANNES BELLINUS INVICTUS FECIT (he was nearly ninety when he painted it), instead of the traditional and commonplace VENETUS. Mr. Austen Chamberlain, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, came to see it, but, with the Railway Strike and other signs of unrest about him, he did not feel justified in advancing the reduced, but still considerable, sum which Mr. Wert-

heimer and Mr. Sulley had agreed with me to accept. 'You will admit that the robbers have not been unduly compensated,' was the latter gentleman's characteristic comment. So, in spite of the fact that the picture had been painted as a companion piece to our *Bacchus and Ariadne*, we had to let it go to Philadelphia.

At first we found it exceedingly hard even to get a sight of the pictures which passed through the London market. The dealers generally were shy of exposing their treasures to the long-drawn discussions, the rumours, the semi-publicity and the almost inevitable refusal to which offers of pictures for purchase had been exposed under the old system at Trafalgar Square. To restore confidence was far from easy. 'No one ever thinks of offering pictures to *you*,' one prominent dealer told me. Others, apparently, thought us imbeciles. That I should be asked £50,000 by a dealer for a dull primitive, which he was thankful, years later, to sell for some £2000, argued, perhaps, more ignorance on his part than impudence. But what was one to say when a genial old friend, who was anything but ignorant, calmly suggested £10,000 as the price for something in his collection which was really worth about £2000: and he 'compromised' eventually on the latter basis!

One cerebral, or physiological, experience perhaps deserves a record. When Blake's famous illustrations to Dante were needed for the Tate Gallery, Baker and I went through them at Christie's, one morning before lunch, selecting those which we admired most, and getting keenly excited. The next day we proposed to review our opinion and selection, since the sum involved was considerable. Before doing so, we deliberately treated ourselves to as good a lunch as the straits of the time permitted, with the idea that the drawings would be enhanced by splendours reflected from our food and drink. We were completely disillusioned. The artificial stimulus had so heightened our perceptions that we viewed everything with coldly critical eyes. Hardly a third of the number we had previously

admired (they still retained a relative excellence) could stand the post-prandial test. 'Never trust your eye when you are feeling hungry,' would seem the obvious moral. Is that, I wonder, why successful dealing is commonly allied with good living?

A spark of mild adventure enlivened this drab official routine. Early in March 1918, while I was bargaining with Roger Fry for a little painting, now attributed to Butinone, he brought me a catalogue of the pictures collected by Degas which were shortly to be sold in Paris. The collection included several notable works by Ingres, Delacroix and other French masters, unrepresented at Trafalgar Square yet badly needed to illustrate the development of modern art. Though I wholly agreed with Fry as to their extreme desirability, I could see no chance at that critical time of getting any money for such a venture. But one of Fry's friends, Maynard Keynes, then a great power at the Treasury, was also roused by the opportunity, and said that if an official request were made for a Special Grant to acquire some of the pictures, he would back it. We were incurring, without question, enormous liabilities for our Continental allies: a few good French pictures would be worth more to us in the end than most of that dubious paper. Lord Curzon at once recognized the value of the suggestion, made the requisite application in Whitehall, and obtained a grant of £20,000.

The next two days were spent in settling preliminaries of the journey with Geoffrey Fry at the Treasury, picking up wrinkles from my friend Mayer as to the methods of French auction-rooms, getting an introduction from my friend Carstairs to Messrs. Knoedler's Paris branch, and polishing up my memory of Ingres and Delacroix. On the morning of March 24th I went with my wife to Charing Cross to meet the members of the International Financial Mission, under whose wing I was to travel. Mr. Austen Chamberlain was its chief, supported by Lord Buckmaster, Sir Alfred Booth, and other cheerful beings: the stalwart Paul Cravath repre-

sented America, a charming General Mola represented Italy, while Keynes, apparently, covered all Europe, though each of the allies had, I fancy, some special nominee. To this most friendly company Geoffrey Fry played the quiet efficient courier, its material needs being supplied no less efficiently by Berry, the Treasury factotum.

A crossing in fine weather, with escorting destroyers and a silver airship watching overhead, gave us a refreshing start. At Boulogne realities began; and we stuffed ourselves at the buffet, knowing that we should get little else to eat for nearly twenty-four hours. As the train dawdled through the sunlit afternoon, it was hard, at first, to realize from an occasional wrecked house or scarred hillside, that we were on the edge of actual war. Gradually the sound of the guns rising and falling on our left increased, but not until we were all in our berths, at two the next morning, did our leisurely progress stop, at Amiens which the Germans were bombing. Only one bomb fell fairly close and made the carriage heave. Though the raid lasted for two hours, I was agreeably surprised to listen without an atom of fear. In London, with wife and children, or under the roof of the Gallery, impotence and anxiety combined to attack the nerves. But here I was, at last, on a very feeble kind of active service: if the end should happen to come, it would no longer be that of a complete *embusqué*.

As we sauntered along once more next morning, the talk turned on the shells falling into Paris. Was a gun of the immense range which such shells required an engineering possibility? Finally Creil platform, crowded with refugees, and eagerly scanned newspapers containing no information, brought us back to realities; confirmed by the first excited words which greeted us at 11.30 as we stepped on to the Paris platform, 'Le canon n'a pas tiré depuis neuf heures.'

Leaving my bag at the Crillon, and presenting my credentials to MM. Hamann and Davey at Knoedler's, I proceeded with Mr. Chamberlain and Keynes to Georges Petit's hot, crowded auction-room, to inspect, compare,

value and mark my catalogue in preparation for the sale next day. Mr. Chamberlain was generally sympathetic, except in the case of a Greco which I wanted. To this he displayed a disconcerting dislike, saying in his impulsive, humorous way that if I bought it he would hesitate about signing the cheque. After dinner he asked some of us up to his room for a smoke, and there we met General Sykes, who gave us an interesting account of what he would do if he commanded the Air Force; as he was soon to do. The morning of the 26th was employed in getting coached by MM. Hamann and Davey, with whom, after lunch, I went to the sale-room and secured an unoccupied corner.

The auctioneer puzzled me at first by disregarding entirely the catalogue order, beginning somewhere in the middle of the numbers, and dodging backwards and forwards at will. This it appeared was the French sale-room plan for giving minor lots the chance of being seen by the whole assembly, and keeping buyers alert. Gradually I got accustomed to his ways and voice, and to translating quickly quotations in francs to their approximate sterling equivalents. I even ventured to beguile the weary waiting by cautious bids for things I did not really want; such was the potency of impatience. Matters had droned on thus for a full hour, when, at three o'clock, a dull 'Boom' sounded outside, as if a smallish bomb had dropped. 'C'est le canon' was heard on all sides, and people began to leave the room. Still the paintings did not appear. At 3.15 a second 'Boom' showed that what we afterwards knew as Big Bertha had again got going. There was quite a considerable rush to the door, at least one prominent Paris dealer being among the fugitives.

Then, at last, the important pictures came up before a much depleted assembly. By great good luck, one of the very finest, the Ingres portrait of *M. de Norvins*, did not appeal to the room so much as the painter's later and more oily products, so we secured it for about a third of the price we expected to pay. But the big Delacroix, *Baron Schwiter*, was not to be had so easily. As I went on bidding there



came a stir, people stood up to look at me, and voices, 'C'est pour le Louvre, Monsieur,' 'Vous luttez contre le Louvre, Monsieur.' It was most unpleasant. Yet if I gave way for a moment to the clamour, the picture would be lost for good and all. Better face a little trouble now, than a permanent regret for funking. So we secured it. Over the other pleasant Delacroix, the Louvre was too strong for me. But we got the pieces of the big *Execution of Maximilian* by Manet,<sup>1</sup> as well as the luminous study, *Mme Manet*, with the cat on her lap, two small compositions by Ingres, the vivid little early landscape by Corot, which Degas kept hanging over his bed, and several other useful things.

Returning in a cheerful mood to the Crillon, I was met by Geoffrey Fry, looking very white; 'The Germans had broken through: the English, overwhelmed, were in retreat; though the French were fighting like tigers at Noyon, Paris was threatened; anything might happen, the Government may have to retire to Bordeaux.' At dinner we were comforted a little by news from the War Council at Versailles of the unified Command; 'Clemenceau is Generalissimo: Foch, Commander-in-Chief.' Hearing of our sale-room doings, a polite liaison officer volunteered to show us a fine private collection in the Avenue du Bois.

It was after ten when we got there, and the owner was out, but a manservant ushered us into a little room plastered with paintings, and brought us whisky and soda. While we wandered about discussing the pictures, an unsuspected door opened and in walked the owner, a huge, suave central European with a cigar to match. Perhaps because I was from the National Gallery, and had been seen buying pictures, he gave me his first attention. But his wares were inferior to what we had just acquired; he quickly found me unprofitable material, and turned to my companion, whose tastes were more modern. The modern pictures were down-

<sup>1</sup> M. Vollard in his recently published *Recollections* tells how this picture was originally cut up, and how the chief fragments were bought by Degas and pasted in position on a large canvas.

stairs; so down we went to a great room hung with the latest products of Matisse and the like. Our host certainly had a way with him. By adroit compliments, 'You and I, of course, know better,' he set about fanning my clever friend's enthusiasm to the purchasing point, by inducing a mood of confidence, of complacency, in which an undertaking to buy became an essential sequel to the intellectual and artistic agreement established between two such superior beings. It was the most brilliant piece of diplomacy I ever witnessed; such a salesman deserved such a palace. Indeed my friend confessed afterwards that he was only saved from rashness by recalling that he had spent all his spare money that very day on a charming work by Cézanne. As we walked away at last into the quiet moonlight I wondered, while hearing of the disastrous bickerings of the High Command, that no German planes came overhead. It was the night, I believe, that they made thirty-seven raids upon Abbeville.

At Knoedler's the next morning, it appeared that no packing-cases for my purchases could be had for love or money. The great packing-case magnate of Paris finally came, top-hatted and frock-coated, with two assistants in blue blouses, to explain with much bowing and hand-waving that the thing was impossible. Could a French man of business refuse money? I offered 250 francs for a case to take the big Manet and Delacroix, with delivery at the Gare du Nord at 10 P.M. The bait was taken. The other pictures would all have to come out of their frames and be packed in bundles. Lunch at the Embassy followed, Lord Bertie grimly regretting, as he gave me the blank cheque for my picture bill, that I couldn't include with it £1200 for his fine inlaid *escritoire*, which he feared the Germans might appreciate, or destroy. From the Embassy we went again to the sale-rooms, but our luck had changed.

We were outbidden for all the good paintings, including the aforesaid Greco, a Perronneau and the best examples of Gauguin. I was too far from the easel to see distinctly the

drawings set upon it. In consequence I got, by mistake, several that I did not care for, in addition to some that were useful. The prices however were not so high as to make one or two slips a serious matter. Over the Greco I made a quick mental compromise between Mr. Chamberlain's dislike, the needs of Trafalgar Square, and Knoedler's wish to get the picture if I failed to do so. It was a small version of the *San Ildefonso* at Illescas. I determined to bid only up to about £3000, and having done so in vain, told M. Hamann he could continue. He got the picture at the very next bid, and we could not grudge him the success; he had been so magnificently helpful and unselfish in enabling us to get almost all we wanted at the cost of about half our grant. Big Bertha, by the way, broke down again after those two timely discharges, and fired no more till we had left Paris.

When everything was cleared we carried back our spoils to Knoedler's, and there we all went down on the floor, Hamann, Davey, Keynes, the typist and myself, wrestling with waterproof paper and string and tacks and pincers, till the pictures and drawings were made up into portable packages. Hamann and Davey were entertained and thanked at the Crillon; then we packed ourselves off to the train. There was a general exodus from Paris. Means of transit were uncertain even for the wealthy. The International Mission was fortunate in having a carriage in the northbound train, although, if the German advance continued, our journey might not end in Boulogne. At the Gare du Nord the huge case was waiting for us, but the stubborn luggage clerk would not pass it, even though a kindly liaison officer explained its International importance. The clerk insisted on having the monster solemnly weighed, and gave me a ticket which I still possess. The case was passed, as the personal luggage of the seventeen members of the International Mission, and the charge for excess weight was 10 centimes.

Next morning, just as I was rescuing my only tie from the

wash-basin, the imperturbable Berry appeared with my breakfast—a roll, a stick of chocolate and half a tumbler of Sauterne, on a piece of greasy brown paper. I put the lot on my bunk. ‘Please,’ said Berry, ‘may I have the paper back, it’s Mr. Chamberlain’s tablecloth.’ The Germans were within nine miles of Amiens. Yet the sound of the guns was actually less than when we had passed through before, and nothing interrupted our leisurely progress, though the opposite track carried one endless procession of trucks with men, stores and cannon filing past us to the Front. Mr. Chamberlain inspected a few of the more accessible purchases; Lord Buckmaster talked pleasantly of trout-fishing; Keynes and Cravath of interest payments. I could not help asking whether America would not soon possess all the gold in the world, while Europe would only have paper? How then could the interchange of goods continue unless in some way the gold and the paper were made equivalent? That, it seemed, was a matter for Commerce, not for High Finance.

At Boulogne, in drizzling rain, Booth and others helped me valiantly with my bundles and, commandeering a hand-cart, wheeled my great case over the cobbles to our boat. How to get the thing aboard I knew not. Spying, however, a personage on the deck, resplendent in gold lace, I called out ‘Mission Internationale’ and waved a fifty-franc note. The spell worked like magic. The monster was duly hoisted aboard, and stacked in comparative shelter, while the bundles were piled in a cabin where one or two foreign members of the Mission already lay supine, prepared for the worst.

Our convoy included two camouflaged hospital ships, and their disembarkation kept us tossing for an hour or more outside Folkestone. Though it was a roughish crossing, I never felt one touch of sea-sickness, being much too anxious lest a German mine or torpedo should catch us at the very last minute, and send all my precious purchases to the bottom. The railway van at Folkestone proved too small for the famous case; it had to follow by the next train, while

I, sharing in a weird meal of coffee and tinned tongue, took on my bundles to a darkened London. Having deposited them, and rested a little at the Club, I routed out an unwilling Deputy Station-master with the magical authority of 'International Mission,' and secured a sufficient handcart, four porters and two lanterns, to await the coming of my case. It came: we all moved off in solemn procession to Trafalgar Square, and there at 11.20 P.M. I was able to leave it in comparative safety. When the Audit office demanded vouchers for the £4, 19s. which the transport had cost me, all I could produce was that 10-centime ticket. On Good Friday, when the revived Big Bertha killed some two hundred people in Paris, I got away to Appleby.

Lord Curzon sent me '1000 congratulations'; the Board accepted even the Gauguin I had bought; we all thanked Knoedler's for their invaluable help; and then our good fortune tempted the making of a similar effort at the sale of works by Degas himself. Eric Maclagan, being now in Paris, could represent both the National Art-Collections Fund and the Modern Foreign Gallery; Lord Curzon secured a grant of £3000, and with Aitken, MacColl, Keynes and myself spent the best part of a week in preparing a plan of campaign. But this time the luck went against us. Prices were rather high; the pictures we most fancied were fancied also by the Louvre, and the brief telegraphed instructions did not provide for any swift change of policy amid the confusion and accidents of a Paris sale-room. A portrait for the National Art-Collections Fund was the only booty secured.

This matter had a troublesome sequel. In October, Lord Curzon called my attention to a paragraph in a weekly paper, imputing the negative result to his interference and lack of taste. I wrote at once to 'Sardonys,' the author of the paragraph (who proved to be Arnold Bennett) endeavouring, by a statement of the facts, to show him that the charge was unjustified, and ought to be withdrawn. Withdrawal I failed to obtain; indeed the first paragraph

was followed by another which, in the guise of a half-apology, managed to be still more offensive. I was much vexed, not only by the unfairness of the attack, but by the distress that a thing, so paltry in itself, had evidently caused Lord Curzon, much harassed as he was at the moment by war problems. With this personal sympathy was allied some official anxiety, lest he should be so discouraged by the outcome of a genuine wish to help us that he would think twice before repeating it. The attack was clearly mere political mud-spattering, and, having been kept informed of my correspondence, Lord Curzon himself came, in the end, to the same conclusion. 'You have been very kind,' said he, so I judged that no permanent harm was done.

Armistice Day coincided with my fiftieth birthday. I had been honoured some months earlier by election, at Lord Dillon's instance, as F.S.A.; my pictures and drawings still had a tiny circle of admirers, and in little more than two years quite amicable relations had been established with the majority of the Board at Trafalgar Square. Nor, apart from my own fear of too much good fortune, did I lack warning as to the other side of the picture. As Ricketts remarked one evening at Lansdowne Road, 'Everyone is dying to see you make a little mistake.'

This, no doubt, was partly my own fault. I might have paid my contemporaries the compliment of consulting them more often. But natural impatience and love of going my own way were not all to blame. Collins Baker and I had no assistant to whom we could delegate critical business. The Cabinet secretarial system brought about a multiplication of official documents and memoranda, to be read, circulated and answered. The Gallery business in itself, at this troubled period, kept us so constantly on the run, that we had to deal in summary fashion with questions which, if once submitted to others, would have involved discussions, differences, delays. These last we simply could not afford if the day's work was to be done. Were it ever left undone, we knew we should be brought to book quickly enough. So

the habit of relying upon ourselves, and paying but perfunctory attention to outsiders of infinite leisure, became ingrained. Moreover, when the Board in January 1919 elected Lord Lansdowne to be their permanent Chairman, we were provided with an authority to whom all important questions had to be referred. The new arrangement relegated the Director to a definitely subordinate place. This was no fatal disadvantage, but the resultant duality of control might easily have involved administrative difficulties, had not Lord Lansdowne's strict sense of constitutional propriety kept the balance even, for the time being.

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CHAPTER XVIII  
PERSONAL DIVERSIONS  
(1919-1925)

Thoughts on public affairs ; the Westminster Play ; the Irish Settlement ; the Chequers Trust ; honours ; at Norwich and Cambridge ; Leonardo da Vinci ; book on the National Gallery ; France and Spain ; expert evidence in Paris and Holland ; the N.E.A.C. ; the Grosvenor Gallery and the R.W.S. ; my wife's music ; social experiences ; fishing on the Eden and the Windrush.

THE background to our activities now lacked neither colour nor variety. Foch and Clemenceau, Haig and Plumer, President and Mrs. Wilson passed in triumph by our Gallery windows ; Lawrence of Arabia impressed me by his fierce self-restraint ; Royal and other personages began once more to visit Trafalgar Square. None of them really seemed so interesting as President Wilson. He might look like a complacent, doctrinaire schoolmaster, yet he stood for things immeasurably greater than himself. It was the unique moment when the co-operation of America with England might make the world fit for cowards like myself to live in. Believing her to be actuated by our own wish to help humanity, we were bitterly disappointed, and perhaps unreasonably, when she repudiated her President and the undertakings he had given on his country's behalf.

At the moment, we were inclined to blame 'The Economic Consequences of the Peace' for the mischief. I remember how its untimely display of the President as the plaything of more lively wits moved even the gentle Lord Plymouth to indignation. But a decision endorsed by a huge, remote populace, whose local, party and personal prejudices were on a par with their inexperience of international affairs, could not have been materially affected by



a few paragraphs in a semi-technical book. Anyhow, the effect of such a *gran rifiuto* upon the moral influence of the United States was immediate, and all the more profound from its contrast to the high ideals and solemn authority by which the President's pledges had apparently been backed. So, in a single moment, America lost the confidence of Europe and the leadership of the world. Her subsequent refusal to cancel out international debts caused comparatively little surprise. It was only another bad commercial miscalculation, as much regretted by the best and wisest elements in the United States as it was in England.

Meanwhile the claims and performances of sundry statesmen and politicians diverted the public. As usual, the Epilogue to the Westminster Play aptly summed up the feeling of the time. Several frock-coated gentlemen appeared, disputing volubly as to which of them had really won the War. A helmeted private soldier, who had watched the talkers in silence, was suddenly asked, 'Quid tu fecisti?' His reply, 'Nil ego. Miles eram,' fairly brought down the house. Indeed, as the next Epilogue put it, some of the folly of that period was 'ipsissima margo.' For these fescennine pleasantries I was indebted to my elder son Martin, then a Westminster Scholar, and a not unsuccessful writer of the Epigrams with which, by tradition, the Westminster curriculum is agreeably diversified. In the precincts of the Abbey, such customs, which would have delighted More and Erasmus, seem appropriate still.

What with food troubles, money troubles, general unrest in the world of Labour, strikes on the Tube, the Railways, and in the Coal industry, we were always kept anxious, and sometimes made uncomfortable. Ruinous as these disputes might be, they never roused quite the same bitterness as the guerilla warfare in Ireland, and the spasmodic irresolution with which it was handled. 'Tyrone is as safe as walking down Piccadilly,' said one responsible optimist to me: the same who encouraged our forces there with, 'Take my

word for it; the British Government will back you through thick and thin,' just two days before the Truce was made which left those forces impotent.

'Tales of the R.I.C.,' first published in 'Blackwood's Magazine,' drew so grim a picture of the situation that I felt it must be an exaggeration of the facts. Happening to meet at dinner an officer who had been through the thick of the trouble, I ventured to ask his opinion of the book. 'Dam badly written, but every word of it is true,' was the reply;—the more significant because the book was *not* badly written, far from it. Assassins and spies at our very doors, with such savageries as the Dublin murders, left a deeper impression than even the German brutalities. A few days before the Truce, and the talks which led to the Irish Treaty, these preoccupations brought on a dream so curious that I can't help telling it.

I found myself at a meeting of the Chequers Trustees. The place and persons present remain vague, but the object of our summons was to protect Mr. Lloyd George from being assassinated. To guide the Police in arranging their patrols, the large-scale plan of the Chequers estate, mounted on rollers four or five feet long, had been deposited at Scotland Yard. But the precautions taken were insufficient; suspicious strangers had appeared in the Chequers grounds. The Prime Minister had faced the intruders boldly enough, and they had retired without doing him damage, but the Trustees would clearly have to consider more effective means of defence. The Police were asked to explain their failure; the great Plan was sent for, and lo! it had been stolen from Scotland Yard. Even that citadel of our civic security was held by the forces of Sinn Féin! What the shadowy meeting decided, if it decided anything, I don't in the least remember: but the proclamation of the Truce a few days later seemed to follow quite naturally.

The dream must have been inspired by one of Mr. Chesterton's pleasant inventions, where the arch-criminal finally reveals himself as the supreme detective, but the

matter of it was unusually vivid and reasonable. As a rule my dreams are vague, mostly connected with fishing and, if I may judge from the black shapes of corruption that I catch, the result of vulgar indigestion. Only once or twice have I found myself wading in the shallows of unknown lakes, and taking a few genuine dream-trout weighing about three to the pound. My monster fish are, alas! confined to the two which I hooked in the Windrush and failed to get out of it. As to the Police:—I once sat next to the Chief Commissioner at a Royal Academy Banquet. His presence, for some reason, made the wine waiter so nervous that I heard him murmur in the great man's ear, as he handed the champagne, 'Rumm or Moederer, sir?'

When the present Lord and Lady Lee were making their wonderful gift of Chequers to the Prime Minister, the Director of the National Gallery was appointed an *ex-officio* Trustee, to look after the collection of pictures in the house. Baker and I paid more than one visit to the delightful old place, providing the materials for a catalogue which Lord Lee subsequently revised and printed. We marvelled, then, that the owners could bear to part, in their lifetimes, with such a perfect haven of peace. Even the bequest of it would have been a princely gesture.

The discussion of preliminaries, including the Bill which defines the terms of the Trust, took me to Downing Street, where I saw for the first time Mr. Lloyd George surrounded by the chief members of the Cabinet. From my lowly place at the end of the big table, I noticed the profound deference which all, even Lord Curzon, showed to him as he sat there smiling, at ease and alert; a master whose merest nod was the crack of a whip. Suddenly a head peeped in through the French window that opened upon the little garden. It was Mr. Bonar Law. He was gaily invited to enter, and took a seat, still smoking his curly pipe, by the side of the Prime Minister; the one man in all the company who seemed completely at ease in that vigilant presence. He was ready enough, too. When I got into trouble over

interpreting a clause in the Bill which had caused some difficulty, Mr. Bonar Law came to my help and, summing up my argument in one homely phrase, carried the business through.

It was amusing to see Mr. Lloyd George, on the strength of his own professional experience, challenge and confute the Lord Chief Justice (Sir Rufus Isaacs, now Lord Reading) over a point of law. Not so amusing, however, was the next meeting, when the Prime Minister suddenly asked me a question about the rating of the National Gallery. I answered it flippantly and I answered it wrong. But before the foolishness was out of my mouth, his instinct marked me for a silly fellow, and he turned away to speak to someone at the other end of the table. It was clear enough why all the others stood in awe of that uncanny thought-reading.

At the close of the meeting I recovered a little of my credit, but at a cost. My attention was called to a portrait over the mantelpiece which an influential member of the Cabinet, hitherto most friendly to me, had offered to present, so that Walpole might be represented at Downing Street. Walpole, Mr. Lloyd George added, was, in his opinion, the greatest of British Prime Ministers, and ought to have this place of honour in the Cabinet Room. Was the picture the right thing? Alas! Alas! The painting was good enough, but the sitter was not Walpole. He was, apparently, the first Lord Lyttelton. I was, of course, compelled to say so, at the risk of displeasing the donor, who was present and warmly disputed my judgment. 'Are you certain?' asked Mr. Lloyd George. 'Yes.' 'Well, that settles it. We don't want Lord Lyttelton here,' and the matter ended, so far as Walpole was concerned.

Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's quiet ways surprised me. From his pre-war reputation I had expected a firebrand. At the single meeting during his first Premiership, I was as pleased to see him turn down a proposal from a too clever friend that he should profit, in some small matter, at his predecessor's expense, as to watch Mr. Snowden putting up a

vigorous fight for the Exchequer over some question of rating, or the like. Such sharp common sense was refreshing at a time when many members of the Labour Government inspired anything but confidence.

To me Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was always most friendly and considerate, genuinely interested in art, and gifted with that supreme grace, a sly sense of fun. At a cheerful little private dinner I once ventured, rather impudently, to have a dig at him. He took not the least offence, laughed with the rest, and bided his time till the conversation turned upon our Foreign Policy. This fascinated him, and he remarked that, if ever he were again returned to office, he would like to hold the Foreign Secretaryship together with the Premiership. To combine them would present no insuperable difficulty in these days; the Foreign Office was so perfectly organized, 'one might almost be at the National Gallery!'

I visited Chequers again in Mr. Baldwin's time, but my chief memory is not of the pleasant luncheon, but of a talk on the terrace with Eric Maclagan. He had recently been staying with some of the Buxton family, who possessed a lake containing trout. For these they were accustomed to fish, but only with barbless hooks. The moment a fish had been brought to the net, the fly was gently removed, and the captive, as gently, returned to the water. The trout had now become quite accustomed to this humanitarian sport, and seemed to enjoy as much as their captors the game of being fished for, played and landed.

As already mentioned, I had recently been elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, an unworthy one I fear, for my work lay in a different field. Now, in spite of even greater unsuitability, of which I made no secret, I was invited by Archdeacon Spooner to join the Committee of the Clergy Orphan Corporation. This at least enabled me to see what immense improvements had been made since my own schooldays; how carefully and how generously each new requirement was considered and provided.

St. Margaret's at Bushey, under Miss Boys, had been famous for some time. St. Edmund's at Canterbury appeared equally happy, and hardly less comfortable, under Canon Burnside, his engaging family, and a group of exceptionally keen masters. The Committee clearly knew its business thoroughly. It needed no help from outside, so I took the first opportunity of returning to work for which I was less ill-adapted.

In the summer of 1931 I received the honour of knighthood, my kind sponsors being Sir Philip Sassoon and Lord Curzon. The latter, fresh from his Marquisate, wrote that his satisfaction was 'more than trebled when the paper told me I had been successful in pulling you in too. I had spoken personally to the P.M. about it. But he is a fugitive sort of bird, and I could not be certain till the end.' The honour was greatly enhanced for my wife and myself by the personal kindness of the King and the Queen in receiving us semi-privately at Buckingham Palace.

In the autumn I was given the opportunity of putting forward two other names for honours. One of them had already been the subject of a ponderous memorial, singularly ill-adapted to its purpose, as it seemed to me when I signed it and as the event proved. But the merits of the case were so evident that a simple statement of them was now quite enough to secure the desired result. The other statement, equally simple, did not fare so well. It led indeed to an interview, and to the offer of a baronetcy, but on terms which my startled acquaintance, who had done good public service for years and years, promptly and rather indignantly declined. Shortly afterwards these concomitants of 'recognition' attracted public notice and, by general consent, were rendered impossible.

Two months earlier, great preparations had been made at Norwich to celebrate the centenary of John Crome by an Exhibition of his works. Everything was done that local patriotism could do to make the occasion worthy of their famous citizen. The National Gallery consented, for once,

to lend some notable specimens of his work; the opening ceremony was to be performed by the Prince of Wales. I was due to say a few words afterwards about Crome as an artist. Just a day or two before the event, I was asked to lunch by Sir Philip Sassoon and introduced to the Prince. It was a time of considerable unrest in the Labour world; the Prince would have to stay in London to be at the centre of things, and I must take his place at the opening ceremony. There was no questioning that decision, but alas! Poor Norwich! All their decorations and preparations would be wasted. However, my wife and I duly travelled down; were received and entertained by our friends the Gurneys; I walked, a sorry, shabby substitute, in the Lord Mayor's state procession, and made the necessary speech. This part of the business, at least, I could do *con amore*, having always had a great admiration for Crome, and liking for his ancient city and the scenery round it.

For sheer pomp and circumstance, nothing, I think, equalled the conferring of an Honorary Doctorate at Cambridge in the summer of 1924. This honour pleased me for the pleasure it gave to my kind uncle Granville Dickson, an old Trinity man, who had greatly admired my father, and now, in spite of his advanced age, came specially to Cambridge for the occasion. After seeing the new galleries at the Fitzwilliam Museum, which Dunbar Smith had designed, most ingeniously, for Cockerell, and after a luncheon at King's, our red-robed procession, headed by the Chancellor, Lord Balfour, and including the other Doctors-designate, the Duke of Rutland, Lord Crawford and D. G. Hogarth, marched over the greensward in the sunshine, past my father's old college of Clare, towards a gate in a big iron railing. Beyond it a great crowd waited for us. But the gate was locked, and nobody could find the key. So right about turn our august procession had to go, and reach the Senate House by some inglorious by-way.

To flaunt about the place in robes for the rest of the day was an experience gratifying to vanity. Never had Cam-

bridge looked so attractive; even its stucco lodging-houses seemed to lose their drabness in that cheerful sunshine. But all the while there loomed a shadow in the background. I was due to make a speech that evening at a grand dinner in Trinity. Nor was my anxiety lessened when I found myself placed immediately on Lord Balfour's right. Yet the uncommon charm of his table-talk gradually brought me some relief, and his charitable 'Well done!' when I sat down carried me through the rest of the evening. The finale, too, seemed appropriate, for I spent the night with Dr. Shipley at Christ's, the very college at which, thirty-seven years earlier, I had so signally failed to get an Exhibition.

Literary labours had restarted in the spring of 1919 with the composing of an address to the British Academy, to celebrate the Quatercentenary of Leonardo da Vinci. Though quite short, the lecture cost me four months' hard work. The infinite curiosity of Leonardo's intellect compelled research into subjects like anatomy, of which I knew nothing, and into other sciences, of which I knew very little. His geological discoveries, in particular, fascinated me by their startling anticipation of the modern standpoint, and explained much of the mystery surrounding this side of Leonardo's life. Had he dared to publish his knowledge of the immensity of geological time, he must have been denounced and punished as an arch-heretic, tampering with the very foundations of faith. When my little hour of lecturing at Burlington House was over, I had, at Dr. Seward's request, to discuss before the Geological Society this part of Leonardo's discoveries, including his account of fossilization, a piece of true scientific deduction which even a Darwin or a Huxley could hardly have bettered.

Notes on some early Constable drawings, privately printed under the title of 'Constable, Gainsborough and Lucas,' covered more familiar ground. A little later my own efforts at painting were discussed and illustrated by X. B. (C. H. Collins Baker), in one of a series of monographs on 'Contemporary British Artists' which Albert Rutherston edited.



A shorter monograph, with some colour-reproductions, had been issued by the 'Studio' in 1920. My 'Illustrated Guide to the National Gallery' (1920-1921), and my share in 'The Making of the National Gallery' (1924), though based on official materials, and published by the Trustees, had of necessity to be written in non-official hours, and the success of the former prompted Mr. Bickers of George Bell and Sons to engage me in a much more elaborate work.

This was to be a study of the National Gallery pictures, of a kind which would help the average educated person to understand the reasons for which each of them was to be admired, without involving him in the minutiae of critical controversy. With this general idea I was in complete sympathy. Specialization in criticism was fast sterilizing all interest in art, just as specialization in warfare was thought to be sterilizing leadership. A survey more general and less inhuman than current scholarship provided, was what the time seemed to require. Moreover, the national collection as a whole is so complete, that only occasional additions from outside (such as the chapter on Japan in the third volume) were needed to enlarge the book from a commentary upon particular works at Trafalgar Square into a History of Painting. The task occupied, burdened and enthralled me for some five years.

The first volume, on the Italian Schools, caused little difficulty, being principally concerned with problems of Form, Design and Colour, over which I had often pondered in the course of my own attempts at painting. The second volume led to trouble. When dealing with the Dutch School, I had to face the problems presented by Light and by Realism. It was interesting, nay exciting, to trace the solutions which the great Dutchmen found; but the interest, the excitement, transferred themselves unconsciously to my own practice, with unfortunate results. By endeavouring to graft these new realistic ideas upon the formal type of design which I had hitherto favoured, I got almost as thoroughly muddled between the claims of Art and of Nature, as I had

been thirty years earlier when starting to paint in my Cowley Street lodgings. Indeed, I attribute the decline in breadth and simplicity which my painting soon began to show, chiefly to theories expounded in that fatal second volume. In themselves these theories were sound enough, appropriate to Dutch painting, and in some respects original; but they did not suit my own limited range of subject-matter and still more limited powers of execution. Two journeys on the Continent helped to distract attention still further from the hills and industries of the North which had hitherto inspired me.

My lively aunt, Miss Holmes, had wintered for many years either in Italy or upon the Riviera. She was now too old and frail to pay another visit to England, so, in 1921, I went out to see her at Mentone. This tour enabled me to visit the principal museums in the south and east of France, and left some still sharper impressions:—rainstorms and clouds over the Alpes Maritimes, a rare pint of Chateaufort du Pape at Lyons (where the inhabitants delight in misdirecting strangers), the cliff-like walls of the Papal Palace, Enguerand Charenton at Villeneuve, the squalor of Arles, the Maison Carrée glowing like a jewel in sunlit Nîmes, and, most of all perhaps, the amazing supply of picturesque material in the neighbourhood of Marseilles. Spain, three years later, proved even more disturbing, with the almost incredible pinnacles and gorges near Miranda, the snow-clad Guadarramas (in places oddly reminiscent of the Pennines), and the grim scenery round the Escorial. These impressions I tried to utilize; but only two or three times, in a sketch of the Guadarramas belonging to Mr. Curnow Vosper, in another of the Alpes Maritimes, and in a painting of the Escorial, did I come near to satisfying myself. The failures were many and bad.

Twice I went abroad as a sort of expert. The first journey was to Paris, for a couple of days. An action had been brought against the present Lord Duveen for venturing to say that an American lady's version of *La Belle Ferronnière* in

the Louvre was not an original by Leonardo da Vinci. Roger Fry, Martin Conway, Schmidt-Degener, Dr. Laurie, besides myself, having been asked to testify to that simple proposition, were solemnly accorded a private view of the rival ladies, set side by side; magnifying glasses, big and little, were brought to bear upon them; consultations with the lawyers followed. When I was cross-examined for some three hours by Mr. Ringrose, the clever American counsel for the plaintiff, a picturesque Paris journalist described me as '*pâle, mordillant sa moustache.*' There was reason for being a little nervous. I had left my spectacles behind in London, and should have been floored if Mr. Ringrose had handed me any document to read.

The second journey was to Holland, to provide evidence for the Dutch High Court in the matter of a disputed Frans Hals. It was a very clever little painting, at first sight above suspicion. But examination with a strong glass betrayed a grain of synthetic ultramarine in the background; a microscope at Delft proved other pigments to be relatively modern; an X-ray photograph showed that the panel on which the portrait was painted had been fastened together with machine-made nails. So instructive was Professor Scheffer's examination at Delft, that I procured a microscope for testing pigments at Trafalgar Square. Incidentally it was delightful to see Holland again; to meet Martin, and Schmidt-Degener, Dr. Schneider and Willy Sluiter, and the rest of the cheerful art-circle there. Yet I could not help regretting the absence of many picturesque, if insanitary, relics of the past which Cripps and I had seen in 1890, and which were now replaced by huge modern blocks of building, not always beautiful. I shall not forget the visit for another reason. It was in the hotel at The Hague that the proprietor brought me a Dutch evening paper containing the first news of Lord Curzon's last illness.

During these years I dutifully accompanied the New English Art Club in its wanderings from the Galleries of the R.B.A. in Suffolk Street to those of the 'Old' Water Colour







REGEERINGS-COMITÉ VOOR NEDERLANDSCHE  
KUNSTTENTOONSTELLINGEN IN HET BUITENLAND

SECRETARIS

WILLY SLUITER, OLDENBARNEVELTLAAN 68

DEN HAAG

7 march 1925

*Dinner-party  
Hotel Witte Bree  
Schreevingen-*



SCHMIDT DE GEVER  
DIR. RIJKS MUSEUM  
AMSTERDAM



GRATAMA  
DIR. FRANS HALS-MUSEUM  
HAARLEM



SIR CHARLES HOLMES  
DIRECT. NATIONAL GALLERY

*to my friend*

*from  
Willy Sluiter*

TRES PULCHRI STUDIO  
THE HAGUE

THREE DIRECTORS

Drawn by Willy Sluiter



Society in Pall Mall (1920), and from Pall Mall in 1925 to Spring Gardens, Southport, Manchester, and back to Spring Gardens, where it rested for two years before migrating, at the end of 1927, to the New Burlington Galleries. At Suffolk Street, I think, the Club reached the zenith of its fame. Steer, Tonks and their circle could always be relied upon; John and Orpen, not yet carried away by the Royal Academy, formed a second nucleus, round which the younger generation could gather, and the critics could buzz. When the Club ceased to have that settled home, instability of residence produced instability in patronage. From being the holder of a strong fortress it became one of several artistic vagrants in the London wilderness.

So far as actual sales were concerned, I found the Grosvenor Gallery and Messrs. Colnaghi more helpful. The Grosvenor, being central, accessible, of moderate size, charmingly decorated, well-lighted, and hung with carefully chosen pictures, gave the most pleasant exhibitions in London, and was popular with the intelligent part of Society. My products were never calculated to create a sensation, but with Mr. Yockney of the Grosvenor and Mr. Max Morris of Colnaghi's (not to mention their chief, Mr. Otto Gutekunst) they found favour, so that between 1919 and 1925, more than a dozen paintings and some forty or fifty water-colours got sold. This total was helped by a show of drawings, chiefly Industrial subjects, at Carfax in 1919; by the purchase, in the same year, by Lord Henry Bentinck, of a group of North-country sketches, now at Underley; and by an exhibition of drawings at the Grosvenor Gallery in 1922.

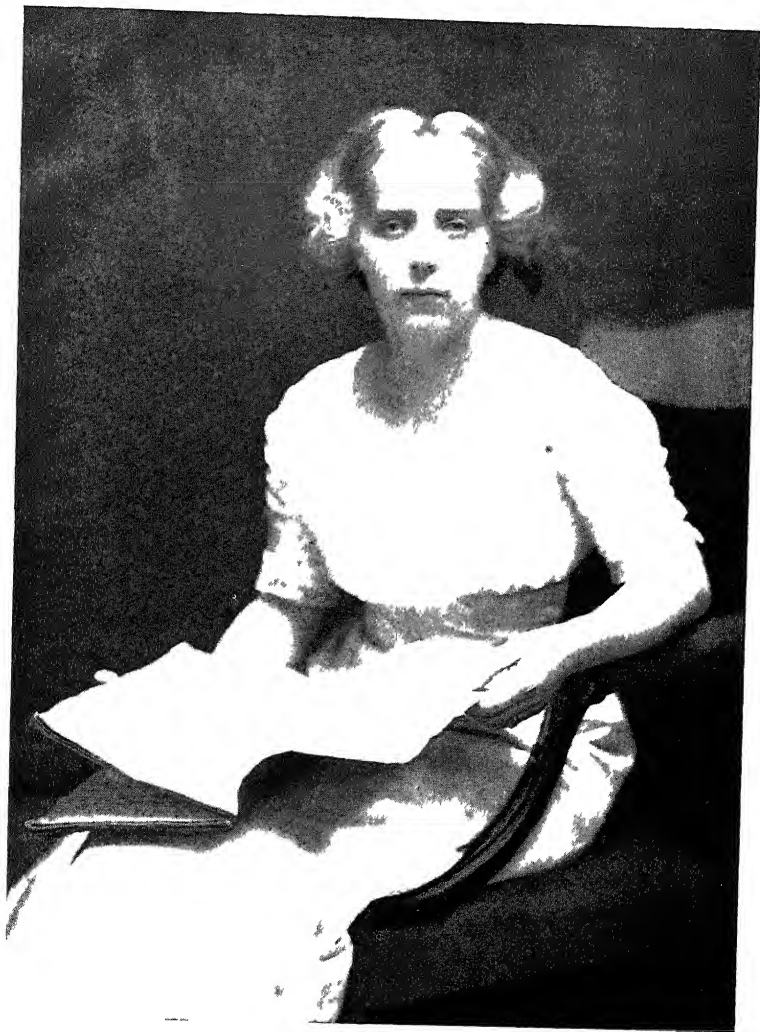
In the spring of 1924 I was elected an associate of the Royal Society of Painters in Water-Colours. Since the Catalogues of that genial Society, like those of the New English Art Club, will be accessible to the curious, I need not bore the reader with details of what I exhibited. One of my best paintings on a small scale, *The Lonely Farm*, failed to find any purchaser for years, until it was discovered by



Lord Henry Bentinck, and given a place of honour at Underley. Other favourites were *Black Hill Moss* (at Melbourne) and *Fells near Sedbergh* (1920), *Stormy Afternoon, Colby Lane* (1921), *A Farm in Winter* (1922), *Farmyard, Soberton* (1924), and *Snow Showers, Cross Fell* (1925), which was rescued by MacEvoy from the studio rubbish heap to which I had consigned it. In retrospect, however, the quantity of the stuff produced interests me almost as much as its quality. Since my official work usually left me too slack or too busy to paint on Saturday afternoons, and since every alternate Sunday afternoon was spent at Richmond with my mother, the rest of the week-end must really have been rather strenuous.

In 1920 we ended, for the time being, our household migrations by getting the remains of the lease of 19 Pembridge Gardens, a house in many ways convenient, though with only a small back-bedroom to serve for a studio. My operatic education meanwhile was being steadily enlarged, not only at Covent Garden, but at the Surrey Theatre, where an attempt to establish opera at popular prices gave us an introduction to the difficulties and the comedy of management. Memorable, too, was a hearing of 'The Valkyrie,' my favourite opera, in the pit of the King's Theatre, Hammersmith;—a family treat, with bananas to celebrate and chasten the eve of a preferment. At Covent Garden, the first performance of 'Rosenkavalier,' under Sir Thomas Beecham, provided the greatest thrill. The setting of the scene in which Oktavian trips up to present the rose was never afterwards equalled. The old settings, too, of 'Götterdämmerung,' with all their defects, seemed incomparably better than our recent rationalized versions, where, at the catastrophic climax, Brünnhilde is not allowed to have her horse, there is no Valhalla to catch fire, and the collapse of the great hall is represented by a plank dropping from the roof of a cart-shed.

My wife, for some years past, had been immersed in Indian art and history, while preparing and composing 'Nur



LADY HOLMES  
(Photo Elliot and Fry)



Jahan,' the first of her full-sized operas. After some private or partial performances, this opera was produced in 1927, 'by kind permission,' at the Parry Memorial Theatre in the Royal College of Music. In the interval she composed a musical jest, 'Dark Knights,' which was privately performed in 1924, and afterwards given for two crowded nights in 1928 at 'The Venture' in Portobello Road. There it was preceded by 'Roast Pig,' a fantasy based upon Charles Lamb's essay. Three or four concerts, at Steinway Hall, at the Serbian Legation by kind permission of the Serbian Minister and Madame Gavrilovitch, at Leighton House and at Mrs. Frank Gibson's, provided opportunities for 'trying out' other experiments in composition and orchestration. But for me the oddest sensation was caused by the composer's appearance at a Wimpole Street fancy-dress party as the Emperor Jahangir. So complete was the disguise that neither her sex nor her race, much less her identity, were recognized at first. I can still remember the look of utter amazement upon the face of our hostess-cousin as this grim, bejewelled apparition advanced from the doorway. Madame de Nevosky, a friendly Russian prima-donna, had lent for the occasion a magnificent collection of ornaments made in Paris for her appearance in 'Aïda,' so that the customary marks by which ladies recognize at a glance the transformations of their intimates were wanting on this occasion. Even I found it hard to believe that the sombre, dusky potentate, surrounded by those fresh, English faces, was not really an Oriental.

But I am easily taken in. Before a lunch at St. James's with the ladies Gleichen, I was introduced to a trim-bearded gentleman in plus-fours. His name I did not catch, but he looked like the typical artist of the 'eighties in a Du Maurier drawing. At table he sat just opposite, and suddenly made such a jest as only one man known to me could make:—it was the protean Walter Sickert. Had I myself been a born *raconteur*, or even conversationally pliable, I might have enjoyed to the full the social diversions to which I was now

introduced. But in the presence of great or brilliant persons I become mute, either from respect for genius or from narrowness of experience. Other people seemed to know all the latest books, plays and films, as well as the celebrities, English or Parisian, who make Society. I had no time to read anything, see anything, or remember anybody outside my office, where any little intelligence I had was always needed, and used up.

Nevertheless I received much kindness. Luxmoore asked me down to Eton, and showed me all that had recently been done there. As the guest of the Provost, I witnessed the celebration of Founder's Day, and nearly perished of cold through forgetting to pack proper underclothing. Discomfort of another kind occurred when I attended a big dinner with a bemedalled guest, where, owing to some mistake, we were allotted places next to the scullions. Worse, far worse, however, was the evening when, after a dinner at Stationers' Hall, I had walked round from my house to settle with a neighbour about a day's fishing. Returning, I was met in the road by an agitated Nannie. A telephone message had been received from a certain address. 'The Queen had arrived and they had sat down to dinner without me. Would I please come along at once.'

I then remembered that, some ten days before, I had found myself seated at lunch next to a singularly pleasant lady, who had said something about my coming to meet one whom I judged to be some relative. Since no invitation had arrived, the matter had gone out of my mind. Now there was nothing for it but to reform my dress as best I could, bundle into a taxi, and get to the house. Sure enough, in the drawing-room, there sat the Queen, looking magnificent, in the midst of a company whose stars and orders and knee-breeches made me more flustered than ever. Though the Queen and all the others were kindness itself to the lump of apologizing misery, he was too frightened to venture near the house again.

Of other hosts, Lord Lascelles and Sir Philip Sassoon were

the most splendid, Sir Evan Charteris the most varied and catholic in his sympathies. At his table, Sargent and John, Charles Whibley, Mr. Winston Churchill and everyone else seemed completely at ease. One Saturday Mr. Churchill took me round to his studio to see his paintings. Like the little Professor I was, and remain, I could not help trying to teach him the value of a scale of tones in constructing a picture. But he, very naturally, preferred his own way of going ahead, hit or miss, trusting, as in his politics, to his exceptional gift for improvisation, his instinctive vigour. *Inter alia* he casually mentioned that his fine studio had been built with the proceeds of two magazine articles—upon painting.

Of great ladies, none attracted me so strongly and immediately as Lady Rothschild. She possessed, and retained to the end, a serene blend of authority, shrewdness and gentleness which reminded me of my grandmother, and one or two other venerable ladies of the mid-Victorian time, to whom obedience and affection were accorded automatically by everyone. In their gracious presence it was impossible to do otherwise. This distinction seemed to be something that was now more rare even than the superb Gainsborough paintings at Tring, or the remarkable sheet of paper which bears two autographs. The main part of the writing is a report from Buonaparte to the Directory of what he has done in Egypt, concluding, 'Nous sommes ici dans l'état le plus satisfaisant, et maîtres de tout le pays.' The letter was captured at the Battle of the Nile, and underneath Napoleon's signature are the words 'Mark the end. Nelson.'

The late Archbishop of Canterbury calls up similar memories. Regarded by many as merely an astute diplomatist, the real simplicity of his character was but gradually revealed. Dinners and parties at Lambeth might show him and kind Mrs. Davidson to advantage in their public capacity; conference might display his penetrating judgment, his practical wisdom; but his humanity and plain sincerity came out best in private. His simple ways could

be almost embarrassing. He was profoundly interested in the collection of paintings at Lambeth, and frequently concerned about the conditions of this portrait or that. I did not so much mind standing on the top of a tall folding step-ladder while the aged Primate held it steady, more or less, on the slippery parquet. But when he wanted to carry the ladder about for me from picture to picture it was necessary to protest.

Entertainment of a different kind was provided at the Windham Club, by that redoubtable fisherman Mr. William Radcliffe. I came to know him through the controversy in the 'Times,' as to the meaning of the Homeric *βόος κέρας*, which followed the issue of his classic work, 'Fishing from the Earliest Times.' In spite of Mr. Radcliffe's Balliol record, in spite of the authority of Dr. A. J. Butler, who in his 'Sport in Classical Times' has since made an intensive study of the Greco-Roman writers upon angling, I still maintain that no fisherman in his senses would attempt to attract his quarry by heaving any sort of leaded ox-horn at their heads. The phrase *must* mean nothing more than a plummet, cast into the shape of (*κατά*) a horn.

Trout-fishing had now become my only open-air recreation. It is true that in Westmorland I got a few days' shooting every season with my brothers-in-law, though the grouse, hares, partridges, and even the rabbits, seemed to get fewer and fewer as the years went by. But my real exercise-ground was the Eden at Castle Bank. Immediately opposite the house, a weir crossed the river. Below it, a very short stretch of fast water, much harried by local anglers, provided practice with the wet fly. Above it, for half-a-mile or more, lay a deep still reach wherein a fair stock of trout, averaging three to the pound, invited and defied capture. For years, the fishers for the pot on the opposite bank so corrupted the taste of these trout, by fishing for them with maggots and a float, that they became ground-feeders. At the same time the motor came into general use, and the branch of the Great North Road which runs

down the Eden Valley drained its washings of petrol and lubricants into the river, till the water-born Ephemeridae were gradually killed off. So when the maggot-fishers had committed suicide, by reducing the carrion-fed trout to horrors which no fishmonger would buy, and the partial cessation of their activities gave the trout a chance of surface-feeding once more, there were practically no flies for them to feed upon.

They remain dour and unwilling risers; yet tiny black midges and the like, upon 5x or 6x gut (their sight is diabolically keen), will occasionally tempt them. High banks, much overgrown, with a barbed-wire fence behind, make casting an expensive problem; to land a fish is a perpetual adventure. When a spate has coloured the water and set it in slow motion, there may, in warm weather, be a genuine rise for an hour or two. At all other times angling there is a pure academic exercise, a Barmecidal sport, a Modernist art, unpolluted by any connexion with material results. Even when some cautious fish has at last been enticed to take a fly, he seldom lets it get past his bony jaw; the tiny hook can get no hold there, and with a kick or two the trout is off again.

In the Mayfly season, my friends at Brasenose still allowed me a day or two on the Windrush near Witney. Swift, and weedy and strong, the stream held much besides trout—pike and otters, alas! and chub in plenty. And it fed the fish so well that, having little need of any surface dainty, they grew as capricious as those of the Eden were cunning. Totally blank days (I have just had three in succession) or catches of one or two chub were the rule; a trout was the exception. But the trout are such superb fighters, and seem, now and then, to attain to a size so exceptional, that one returns year after year to the water filled with fresh hope. My particular stimulants are two in number.

For several seasons a big snout used to poke up at a corner usually inaccessible. But one day a strong east wind enabled me to get a wet hackle-fly to the eddy. It was



seized at once by the big fish, which, after boring chub-like into the depths, drifted down clumsily to me. There lay a huge brown trout of six or seven pounds weight, so fat that he could hardly swim, within a few inches of my net. Suddenly there was a sickening relaxation of the strain; the fish wobbled back to his corner, and I was left to curse a hook which had straightened out.

Eight years later my heart leaped again as something gigantic splashed at a Mayfly, not twenty yards away. This time I took no risks. In my cap was an undamaged fly that had taken a two-pounder that very morning. I tested the hook, used a Turle knot, and tested everything again with strong jerks, before risking a cast over the weeds to get at the giant. He had the fly in a moment, and tore off downstream towards a pool with a guardian willow root. Though I backed into the meadow, gripping hard on the line till my rod, a very powerful one, bent nearly double, I could neither stay nor divert the amazing weight and violence of the force opposed to me. Never have I felt the like. The fish reached the willow, and once more came that fatal slackening. He was off, and I reeled in a mangled fly, the whole point of the hook smashed away, the shank twisted as if by a pair of strong tweezers. Year after year the thrill of that tremendous experience entices me to the place; year after year I bring back little or nothing to my sceptical family. I have never actually taken a trout there of more than  $2\frac{3}{4}$  lbs.;  $1\frac{1}{4}$  lbs. seems to be the average; and weeds or flaws in tackle reduce by half such few captures as the easterly gales, which now dominate the Mayfly season, leave for me to attempt.

Now and then North-country practice has come in useful upon South-country waters. In the Bourne, immortalized by Mr. Plunket Greene, a Snipe-and-Purple caught trout which disdained its floating counterpart, the Iron Blue. In the Meon, on a cold windy day, a biggish sunken Greenwell took 31 fish, of which I had to keep four brace, to confound sundry sceptics at the Inn. Once, on the Gade, I had the horrid experience of fishing before a crowd collected on the

bridge above me, for a trout lying almost out of reach. Of course, after I had waded in to my limit, the fly caught on a thistle behind, and I had solemnly to wade to land and begin all over again. But I got that trout in the end—with, quite accidentally, a second fish. As I stood nearly waist-deep among the weeds, one strand of them swayed slightly; another did likewise; evidently something was moving slowly through the under-water forest. A few yards ahead lay an opening in the greenery perhaps two feet across. On to this I pitched my Welshman's Button, and waited. In less than half a minute the fly was quietly sucked down and the fish well hooked.

But enough of these rare red-letter days. In general, fish seem to have grown too clever to be hooked upon any 'points' that are not too fine to hold them. I can't think my casts are responsible; Mr. Dunne's preparation really seems to give drawn gut a new lease of life. Does the fault then lie with the rod? Must I discard the noble casting-engines that Messrs. Farlow have built for me, which will lift a wet line above almost any obstruction on the bank behind, and revert to the gentler action of the 'Boys' rods made by Messrs. Hardy? On the Eden, at least, I seem to lose fewer flies in branches, fences and fish, when using this cheap and admirable substitute for the orthodox split-cane. But it would require the mind of a Charles Darwin to work out the pros and cons of the matter, and the pen of a Bernard to make the result worth reading.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE NATIONAL GALLERY (ii)

(1919-1925)

Voluntary and other assistants; redecoration and rearrangement; handbooks, photographs, lectures, music; help from Parliament; the Lane and Chantrey Bequests; Sir Aston Webb; some notable pictures; two cause trouble; death of Claude Phillips and other good friends; a claim by the Inland Revenue; Lord Curzon's last years.

BEFORE silent thankfulness for the signature of the Armistice had time to find vent in cries of joy, we were pleading with the Treasury for a junior assistant. To set in motion the multifarious machinery of the Gallery, and to keep it running, was more than two pairs of hands could possibly do.

Voluntary help we had already received from Mr. Fred Wallop, a good judge of English pictures, a fountain of information upon social topics or family pedigrees, and from Henry Oppenheimer, jolliest of financiers, collectors and friends. When the War began, 'Hen. Op.' had severed, at a heavy cost, his connexion with the firm of Speyer Bros. Then, as already related, his prompt action enabled us to secure the Tube station for the storage of our treasures. Finally he worked under us as a clerk, seeming happiest when his tasks were the humblest. Born and bred in Germany, he had countless friends and connexions there, particularly among scholars; yet he supported England with a single-minded devotion, made all the more admirable by the sacrifice of old associations which it continually exacted. I enjoyed his hospitality; I admired the masterpieces in his famous collection; but it was the man himself who made these things precious, and left me always wondering how a fortune in the City could ever have been made by one so essentially simple and good.

Our requirements at Trafalgar Square were now too great to be satisfied by any temporary helpers. Young soldiers were being set free, and the first who came to us was John Dodgson. But his desire to be a painter proved too strong, and the picture upon which he was then engaged, a war memory of motor-bicycles under repair, showed such exceptional promise as to justify his decision to give up office work. He was succeeded by R. M. Y. Gleadowe from the Admiralty, whose talent had been apparent in his undergraduate days at Oxford. A most delicate draughtsman, his diversity of gifts proved useful in many ways, until he also found our routine irksome and accepted a mastership at Winchester. This he afterwards combined with the Slade Professorship at Oxford. While Gleadowe was 'trying out' his mastership, his place was taken by his lively and helpful friend, Dynely Hussey. When the time came, however, for a definite Civil Service appointment, the claims of W. G. Constable, formerly Fellow of St. John's, Cambridge, and now slowly recovering from the effects of active service, were so strong that Hussey left us to join the staff of the 'Times.' Constable remained with us from September 1923 to the time of my retirement, shortly afterwards accepting the Directorship of the Courtauld Institute, to which he has recently added the Cambridge Slade Professorship. To these able assistants, and particularly to his colleague, Collins Baker, 'his prematurely aged young men' as the 'Times' once termed them, the Director owes the best part of any respectable work that may then have been done at Trafalgar Square. Mr. H. I. Kay (now Keeper), with Mr. Booker, Miss Cox, and their admirable photography, also deserve remembrance well; as do Wadham and Tyrer among the attendants.

To collect our scattered pictures from the Tube, from Overstone and from Cheltenham, was much easier than to exhibit them. Clerks from the Admiralty, and their appurtenances, still occupied a large part of the gallery and the ground floor. The whole place cried aloud for redecora-

tion, and for many other things. And over us all hung the black cloud of National Poverty. Having spent umpteen millions a week on the Arts of War, we had nothing whatever left for the Arts of Peace. The difficulties were more apparent than real. In placing all secondary works in a Reference Section, and reserving the upper rooms for exhibiting only the very finest pictures (as at the Portrait Gallery), we found general support. In the matter of decoration, the views of the Trustees proved so divergent that experiment in various styles was a natural result. This permission, in its turn, was controlled by official orders for the very strictest economy. Plain paint, and not too much of that, was all the Nation could afford.

Personally, I wished for nothing better. Paint did not absorb dust and dirt as woven fabrics do, nor was it so apt to fade and discolour. The walls, years before, had been decorated with deep tones of green or red, now grown dark and heavy. To make the place cheerful, much lighter schemes were needed. Mr. Brown, the foreman painter of the Office of Works, proved an expert ally, and on one occasion, where the paint had been laid too uniformly, Gleadowe and I took brush in hand after closing hours, and in two or three strenuous evenings stippled a mosaic over a whole room. Not all the rooms yielded to treatment so easily as No. XXI, where the original ground was of silver, but in Room XXVI an unexpectedly rich effect came from hatching a thin coat of gray over the original deep red. As the Siena Gallery had served as model for the white walls of Room I, so the Sacristy of S. Lorenzo suggested a scheme from which the stark ferro-concrete of our office passages derived a certain dignity, the *pietra serena* effect being produced by clever Mr. Brown with a pad of sacking.

While the rooms round the Dome were still filled with Admiralty desks and chairs they had a striking resemblance to a cruciform church. This resemblance we now utilized by grouping in them our large Italian altar-pieces, which had hitherto dwarfed all pictures of moderate size hung near

them. In this 'church' the altar-pieces found something like their natural setting; the walls elsewhere were freed from their disproportionate magnitude, and if the light sometimes was rather dim, that was not inappropriate to religious tradition.

The chill winds of economy blighted one much-needed improvement. The roofs of two rooms at the east end of the building had to be reconstructed. As the rooms were much too high to show pictures to advantage, we took the opportunity of trying to get them made lower, but in vain. To put them right would add to the expense. That was not all. In the course of the discussion, plans got through which left them too dark as well as too lofty. We took special care to avoid both these faults when designing the Mond Room. In its simple way this shows the pictures admirably, and suggests that elaborate schemes for avoiding reflections are superfluous if walls are really well lighted.

After a little skirmishing, we were allowed to publish postcards, photographs, catalogues and guide-books on our own account, with our Lewis Fund to serve for working capital. Previous apprenticeship to publishing now came in useful. While Baker applied himself to postcards and photographs, I compiled an Illustrated Guide to the place, on a plan developed from the Boston Museum Handbook. Being more attractive in looks, if much less informative, than an Official Catalogue, this Guide had an immediate success. The annual sale ran into five figures, and the £400 profit, when added to the still greater profit from photographs, made a pleasant contribution to our Purchase Funds. A few diehards might sneer at the gay Catalogue Stall as degrading the Gallery to the level of a shop, but the public interest which it evoked, quite apart from the profits, was enough to console us. Of the photographic studio, fitted up by H.M. Office of Works, we were particularly proud.

The attraction of the public by lectures might also have been held up, but for the invaluable support of Lord Sudeley. That smiling enthusiast, undeterred by any rebuffs,

compelled unwilling, embarrassed Members of both Houses of Parliament to visit the Gallery, agitating everywhere with such good-humoured persistence that the barriers of retrenchment gave way. A lecturer was restored to us in the capable person of Hubert Wellington, who, like most of those who helped us then, has now passed on to more profitable employment.

Another product of National Poverty was an increase from two to four in the number of paying-days per week, the extra receipts being credited to our Purchase Grant. By instituting a series of musical performances on one of these paying-days, we made a little extra money, and started a fashion which has since become popular elsewhere. Gleadowe had the bright idea; Sir Hugh Allen blessed it; my wife helped with details, and all was going well, when two successive November fogs, by depleting our audience, compelled us to stop during the winter of 1922-3. The start had been made in July by a quartet from the Royal College of Music; The Kendall Quartet, The Royal Academy of Music, the Hill Rivington Quartet, the Snow Quartet, and the Cathie Quartet were the other performers. Before the music could be resumed in the spring, the extra paying-days, its *raison d'être*, were abolished.

They had never been a popular institution, though the only overt protest was a procession in Trafalgar Square of art students, carrying a banner and headed by an impulsive friend;—a distinguished artist, and a Trustee of the Tate Gallery! Another procession, and another banner, celebrated the late Lord Leverhulme's decapitation of his portrait by Augustus John. The caricature-banner was left on our steps, and may still be reposing somewhere in the Gallery cellars. Our feelings towards this performance were modified by the fact that Lord Leverhulme had outbidden us at Christie's for a very fine Catalan primitive, and had declined to transfer his purchase to the Nation when we begged him to do so.

The increased cost of living now called for a general re-

consideration of salaries. At the conference on the subject, we were even more dismayed than amused by the superb indifference to the things of this world shown by certain eminent colleagues. They felt it beneath the dignity of Art and Scholarship to ask for better pay, quite forgetting, in their unselfishness, that their less well-to-do subordinates could not afford such princely abnegation. Salaries are strictly graded, and the underlings would inherit all the pains of self-denial with none of its glory. Of course the heroic gesture was applauded by the official economists; it foreshadowed a great and wholly unexpected saving. But, rather incautiously, they went on to improve the occasion, pointing out how unimportant Art and Scholarship really were to the Country, compared with their own practical administrative labours. This sweeping pronouncement was rather too much for our Trustees: it led to a protest and a rational settlement.

The provision of funds, not only for current purchases, but for saving our artistic heritage from the natural ambition of American millionaires, was constantly debated by the Board. Our Parliamentary Bills had been dropped, but innumerable schemes, Memoranda and Conferences, for passing on the expense to other people, by an Export Duty upon Works of Art, a Stamp Duty upon all Sales, or a Tax upon Auction Sales, occupied a vast amount of time, and invariably came to nothing. A plan suggested by Mr. Winston Churchill, when Chancellor of the Exchequer, was in my opinion the most practical of the lot. Perhaps for that reason it was also the most short-lived.

Real progress began in 1921, when the powers at the Treasury, having discovered us to be sensible, became sympathetic. About the same time Sir Philip Sassoon was appointed a Trustee. Young, rich and clever, like the hero in a novel by Disraeli, he was in touch with all the great ones of the day, and so was able to do us more than one notable service. I had discussed with Sir Richard Hopkins the possibility of an amendment to the Finance Act, whereby art



treasures of National importance could be freed from Estate, Legacy and Succession Duties if they were sold to National institutions. This amendment Sir Philip promptly proposed and carried in the House of Commons. Owners, at last, had a substantial inducement to give the Nation the first refusal of anything which they wished to sell. Sir Philip followed up this initial success by obtaining, in the course of a debate in 1922, an undertaking from the Chancellor to help liberally towards the retention in England of a few works of the very highest importance should they ever come into the market. This undertaking, renewed by successive Governments, solved the gravest of our financial problems.

Such a provision had been the ideal of our 'Burlington' days. In working out the details we were most generously helped by Sir George Barstow, but my personal explanation of them to the Chancellor, Sir Robert Horne, nearly proved a ridiculous fiasco. There was so much to say that I could say nothing, and had not Sassoon come to the rescue the appeal must have failed completely. Two considerations, doubtless, induced a tolerant reception. The list of irreplaceable works was very short; and most of the pictures upon it were unlikely to come upon the market for some time, if ever. Not one, indeed, was purchased during my term of office, but shortly after my retirement the Gallery was able to acquire, by this provision, the 'Wilton Diptych' and the great '*Cornaro*' *Family* by Titian.

England was not the only country exposed to the enterprise of transatlantic collectors. America, it was rumoured, had formed a great syndicate to purchase, for some two and a half millions, the pick of the treasures of the Vienna Gallery. On the other hand, if Vienna were to deposit some ten or twelve of these masterpieces on loan to the National Gallery, for a period, say, of ten years, the pictures would serve as a 'token' acknowledgment of a money loan of far greater value, and Austria would be saved from the necessity of selling her National treasures outright. The idea was taken up warmly by Lord Curzon, but when the pro-

posal received open official encouragement, it was swelled and complicated by claims from other institutions, and from one of our Allies; was passed on, thus inflated, to the Reparations Commission, and there collapsed in the wind of international talk.

My chief memory of the business is that of a journey to Paris. At Boulogne, a middle-aged stranger handed over to my charge a rather attractive young niece, and then abruptly vanished. She would be met by her aunt, Madame de —? at the Gare du Nord. She was not met. As we waited and waited on the platform my embarrassment increased; the whole thing was too like an incident in a novel. If my mission had been of momentous import, I should have suspected a plot. Anyhow, I was too old for romance. It was a relief to find the nameless young lady to be even more uncomfortable. She was afraid either to drive to her aunt's house alone, or to let me know the address and give her a lift. This last she had eventually to do, and her relief at falling into the arms of friendly retainers at the door of a mansion near the Madeleine was as genuine as mine at being rid of her. But I had delayed too long. My room at the hotel had been filled. Paris was crowded, and in the end I found myself tramping the street, with my bag, in steady rain, unable to find either a taxi or a bed for the night. In this outcast condition I appealed to a passing nurse. She directed me to a discreet hotel, patronized chiefly by royalties and ambassadors, where I was permitted to have the use of an attic. The bill next morning made me thankful that it was not a bedroom.

The controversy over the Lane Bequest was a persistent intruder upon regular work. Lane's promises had been made to Aitken and MacColl, so had Duveen's offer of a Modern Foreign Gallery to render the Bequest effective; yet we, at Trafalgar Square, had to keep an eye upon the innumerable documents and arguments which each party brought forward. It was lucky that we did so. The Government, always eager to give Ireland the benefit of

any doubt, was most anxious that no injustice should be done to those who claimed that a signed but unwitnessed sheet of notepaper, discovered some time after Lane's death among his miscellaneous effects, ought to take precedence of his formal, legal Will.

One afternoon I was suddenly ordered to bring down the Lane papers to a Committee of the Cabinet. I crammed the bulky file into an attaché-case and hurried to Whitehall to hand it over. Instead, I found myself ushered into the presence of the Committee itself, and expected to state the English case in answer to the Irish Secretary. Looking round the august assembly, I thought I recognized, in a smiling countenance just opposite, a distinguished Civil Servant with whom I had a nodding acquaintance at my Club; so I nodded to him, by way of encouraging myself, before settling down to receive Mr. Ian Macpherson's attack. Happening to take off my glasses a few minutes later, I saw to my dismay that I had been mistaken, and had claimed acquaintance with Mr. Stanley Baldwin.

The Irish plea, though eloquently stated, had a disputable foundation in fact, and no legal validity. It was not therefore difficult, even without preparation or first-hand knowledge, to put the case for common sense, and I was much struck, as were others, by that quality when it came to Mr. Baldwin's turn to speak. To reverse a recent and formal testamentary disposition by Sir Hugh Lane, whose soundness of mind and business capacity were beyond all question, would be to violate a basic principle of the law of the land, and would open the way to endless abuses. The Committee in consequence recommended, if I remember rightly, a sharing of the French Collection by means of generous loans to Dublin. This partition the Trustees approved and offered, in vain. Some years later, a special Government Committee of Three was appointed to reconsider the evidence and, with the best will in the world, could come to no other conclusion. The Committee interested me because one of the three was Major J. W. Hills, whose

'Summer on the Test' is, I think, the finest description extant of modern trout-fishing—and I am not forgetting Mr. Halford, Lord Grey, Mr. H. T. Sheringham, Mr. Skues, Mr. Plunket Greene and other masters of the fly-rod and the pen.

The untiring energies of the Tate Gallery were now partially diverted by contention with the Royal Academy for a share in choosing the pictures bought for exhibition at Millbank from the Chantrey Bequest. Some reform was essential, and I quickly learned to respect the abilities of the President, Sir Aston Webb, in reconciling this necessity with the stubborn resistance to all reform offered by certain veteran members of his Council. As an architect Sir Aston might be more successful than heaven-sent; as a diplomatist he had few equals. Once, being interested in an Academic election, he spent the night before it at Oxford with the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Farnell. Hardly had the proceedings opened next day, when that erudite but impressionable authority, to our amazement, burst out into a denunciation of the practical value of scholarship. So overwhelming was it, that it completely swept aside the claims of the most eminent among the candidates, and Sir Aston's man was very nearly appointed on the spot, because he alone was not a scholar. An adjourned meeting did something to restore proportion. Freed from the spell of Sir Aston's magic, the Chairman now pronounced for scholarship as definitely as he had condemned it a week earlier. Personally, when settling occasional differences between ourselves and the Royal Academy, I found it a great help to be able to discuss them with one so shrewd, so sensible and so friendly as the President. We both tacitly recognized the difficult material which he had to handle, and the Academy owes not a little of its present reputation for tolerance to the tact and moderating influence displayed by Sir Aston Webb during that critical time.

Our main business, of course, was to secure the pictures which the Gallery ought to have. At the moment of our

supreme penury, the 'Wilton Diptych' gave us a bad fright. It was, apparently, on offer to a friendly firm at £40,000. In despair I wrote to Mr. Bonar Law and asked for the money. He offered us half: the rest must be raised by subscription. Any public appeal, at the time, was impossible. I therefore wrote again, asking for a promise of the whole sum, explaining (on the strength of a remark of Lord Lansdowne's) that the money would probably not be needed, but that the effect upon the credit of the Nation in the Art Market would be immense. Mr. Bonar Law very nobly gave us the guarantee; the money was not required after all, but the reality of the Gallery's financial backing was established for good. Since we had all the time to compete with the vast resources of America, this confidence was essential to any serious negotiation.

In 1919 Prince Youssoupoff suddenly appeared with his two famous Rembrandt portraits, still concealed by the 'Modernist' canvases under which he had contrived to bring them out of Russia. Thrilling as was his account of the death of Rasputin, the story of his own escape, in the disguise of an art student, with the family jewels swathed round his body in long, painful chains, was no less vivid. Trying indeed must the moment have been when a Kommissar, much interested in the arts, took a fancy to one of the Prince's first experiments in painting, and wanted to buy it, in ignorance of the fact that it covered a Rembrandt masterpiece. He was put off with difficulty, and the promise of a still better work when the student had acquired a little more experience.

How uncertain conditions in Russia still were, we learned from other sources. At one time I had to prepare a valuation of the principal pictures in the Hermitage Gallery, owing to a rumour that they were shortly to be sold. Shortly before, the Gallery had sent a young official to us to learn how we kept our pictures in good condition. He painted the Russian situation in rosy hues. His Director was a personal friend of Lenin, and through him the officials of

the Gallery had every kind of privilege. Two years later he wrote to me from Paris, and his letter began: 'I have now escaped from Russia.'

We made a point of seeing everyone who called at the Gallery with pictures for sale. In general this was a sad waste of time, for the paintings offered were either things we didn't want, or utter rubbish. But one day a cosmopolitan gentleman came to ask if he could get us anything in Austria. I happened to remember the only known masterpiece by Brueghel which was in private possession, and modestly asked for that. Off he went, and presently quoted £50,000. Our price was £15,000. The picture changed hands, and the new owner, a pleasant fellow, asked successively £30,000, £22,500 and finally £15,000. But the negotiations had lasted so long that all our little money had been spent. So *The Adoration of the Kings* could only be paid for in instalments, with generous help from the National Art-Collections Fund and from a new benefactor, Mr. Arthur Serena.

The art of Romney, being as much depreciated by common, clever critics as it is over-valued by dealers, is a thing which the politic Director will eschew. But the big *Beaumont Family* illustrated Romney's clean, masterly brushwork, and his unique perception of English character, so much better than anything which we possessed, that I had to advocate the unfashionable purchase. Far more popular, of course, with the critics was *The Agony in the Garden*, by Greco. This came over with a hole right through the canvas, and a coating of greasy filth, in the middle of which two small spaces, recently cleaned, shone out bright and livid. The Board, to whom Greco's manner would anyhow have been objectionable, were naturally horrified at the sight. I did my best, but the Trustees were equally divided when it fell to Lord Curzon to give the decisive vote. Glancing over his shoulder at the unhappy canvas, he remarked, 'I would not myself give that much,' here he snapped his fingers, 'for the picture, but after what the Director has said

I have no option but to vote for it.' When we came to clean it, we found that the tough covering of grease and dirt had acted as a preservative, and that the paint had escaped the granular desiccation which is apt to attack all pictures exposed to the climate of Madrid.

We had long possessed a fine *Trinity* by Pesellino, known to be the centre portion of a larger altar-piece, which had been cut up some eighty years ago. Lady Brownlow now bequeathed to us an angel belonging to it. We were able to buy the corresponding angel from Lady Henry Somerset, and to obtain, through Lionel Cust, the loan from the King of two beautiful figures of Saints, one of the Prince Consort's far-sighted purchases. A few years later, the remaining figures were discovered in the Kaiser's private collection, in the Schloss at Berlin, where I went to see them. Negotiations for the purchase of this fragment dragged on, and were not concluded at the time of my retirement. But the altar-piece as now reconstructed is something of a curiosity, since to no other single painting have the Monarchs of England and Germany, the National Gallery and two great ladies, each contributed a piece.

The sensation of the time was the sale of Gainsborough's *Blue Boy* to America. We had forwarded an English offer of £70,000 for the picture, but that was not enough to save it. We had to content ourselves with the sixpences from entrance fees during its exhibition in January 1922. Our beautiful Quinten Massys reminds me, chiefly, of a wild night drive in a small open car, after a dinner at which Mr. Charles Clarke most generously agreed to give it to the Nation. The great *Christ before Pilate*, of Honthorst, discovered by Gleadowe, cost us only £200, and a small controversy as to whether the judge represented is Pilate or Caiaphas. Another £200 purchase, the little Montefeltro family group, led to more recondite questioning. Personally, I thought it might prove to be one of the rare essays in the painting by the architect, Bramante; Mr. J. P. Heseltine, quite independently, came to the same conclusion. Many, including

Claude Phillips, suspected it for a forgery; Buttery and Holder, in consequence, submitted the worm-eaten panel to ordeals by heat, water, and various solvents. It resisted them all; and remains a problem.

Trouble of another sort was occasioned by Ochtervelt's *Music Party*, which we first saw in a shop-window. Not till after we had bought the painting did a photograph in the Witt Collection reveal a large dog in the foreground, which had, most ingeniously, been painted over. Fortunately the performer of the vanishing trick was known, and he brought back the missing animal, with consummate ease, in less than an hour. No surprise, however, was so complete as that occasioned by a visitor with an attaché-case. From this he produced a parcel in a silk handkerchief; and from the handkerchief the precious *Nativity* by Geertgen Tot Sint Jans.

Other pictures were not acquired so easily. Two fine examples of Holbein, after long discussion with the owners, never came actually within our reach. The famous *Man in a Fur Cap*, by Karel Fabritius, caused us a whole series of anxieties. It was to be put up at Christie's, but Lord Curzon was confident that he could get it withdrawn and sold to us privately. I had information that this was impossible. 'My dear Director,' replied our Chairman, 'you must remember that I have infinitely more experience of Sales and Auctions than you,' and off he went to King Street. His mission having failed, the Board had to settle how much they should bid. The Trustees consented to go as far as 6500 guineas, and were asked not to appear in the sale-room, lest by proclaiming the Nation's interest they should stimulate that of our rivals. Alec Martin would act for us with particular pleasure, since the picture, if secured, would be a noble memorial to his friend Claude Phillips, from whose Bequest the purchase price would come.

I had just received by telephone the glad news that Martin had succeeded in getting the picture for 6300 guineas, when Lord Lansdowne was announced. He and another Trustee had kept our intention secret by attending the sale, and were



glad to see that we had acquired the picture. But, had I not exceeded the Board's instructions as to price by some 300 guineas? Would I mind letting him see the Minutes of the last Meeting? It was a disquieting question. Years before, when Sir Edward Poynter had gone a little beyond the Board's limit in order to secure Hogarth's *Quin*, Lord Lansdowne had insisted upon his making good the difference out of his own pocket. Could I possibly have made a similar and far more expensive mistake? I sent for the Minute Book, and all was well. Faced with the figure of 6500 guineas, my noble visitor had nothing to say, and took himself off.

Yet our troubles with that Fabritius were not over. The surface was slightly cracked and very dry: the pigment, in many places, a mere film of brown, which would suffer in cleaning unless it were most tenderly handled. One or two of the Trustees strongly favoured a Continental restorer, of unquestionable repute and scientific knowledge. Now I happened to have seen this famous man at work upon another delicate picture, which the Gallery contemplated purchasing. His drastic handling so frightened me that I transferred, on the spot, our official preference to a companion work, as yet untouched by him. Yet so great was the man's reputation, and in many respects so well earned, that only after considerable debate could I get sanction for entrusting the Fabritius to less famous but more gentle fingers. The result of the cleaning was a success, as anybody can see to-day, and was admitted to be so at the time; but I wonder whether success achieved in the face of a convinced opposition is really politic.

Few things in life seem to excite such profound feeling as questions of taste in matters of art. You may challenge a man's political opinions with impunity; you may correct his facts or figures without rousing more than a smile; but to question his judgment as a connoisseur is no laughing matter. As a simple experiment;—press an Epstein upon a J.P., or a Romney upon an intellectual. Every such pin-prick leaves its tiny scar behind, and the sum of them may

mount up in a few years to quite formidable corporate soreness. How suddenly the irritation may start, how effectively it may strangle initiative, was proved by another purchase.

There swam into our ken a painting by a famous master of the utmost rarity. The work combined uncommon brilliance of condition with one striking feature which seemed, at the moment, incongruous. Possibly on this account, the authenticity of the picture was doubted by a member of the Board who had shown me conspicuous personal kindness, and was one of our most influential backers. He begged me, as a friend, not to recommend to the Trustees a work in which he totally disbelieved. Gratitude and friendship urged so strongly that I would have yielded to the entreaty at once, even if the painting had been of considerable importance: but I knew this to be a chance which the Gallery could *never* get again, and I was taking the Nation's pay for exercising my personal judgment. The tradition of the Service forced me to recommend the picture; I could only try to mitigate my friend's disappointment by giving the fullest weight to his objections when stating the case to the Board.

The outcome was disastrous. We acquired the picture indeed, but its excellence was a poor consolation to me for the loss of a friend, and of the support which he gave us. For his influence, transferred to the opposition camp, placed us thenceforth in a permanent minority, at the mercy of any resolution which policy or accident might generate, especially when, with Lord Curzon's death, we lost the one Caesar to whom effective appeal had been possible. When giving evidence before the Royal Commission in 1928,<sup>1</sup> I had this

<sup>1</sup> 'The services of a foreign picture-cleaner were pressed upon him strongly by certain members of the Board, and on the Director's refusal to take responsibility for the change, he was ordered to report to the Board before any cleaning of importance was undertaken (January, 1925). Shortly afterwards the Director was forbidden to make any change in the attribution of pictures in the Gallery without first reporting to the Board. Two years later the Trustees rejected the Director's plan for hanging new acquisitions. By these and other decisions of minor importance, the Director's power of making any change in the arrangement, repair or labelling of the collections without risking a conflict with the Board was extinguished. Even the propriety of his encouraging important gifts to the Gallery was seriously challenged.'

constitutional disadvantage in mind. The position in time became so depressing, so fatal to progress, that I applied in 1926 for permission to retire, in order to take up a provincial curatorship; much as my colleague Collins Baker had afterwards to do.

These years were fatal to other friendships. By Lord Plymouth's death we were deprived of our most staunch defender among the Trustees. Then Lord Ribblesdale's health broke down, and he was compelled to resign his seat on the Board. Seldom intervening in debate, and affecting to watch our discussions with the detachment of a sportsman at a street-fight, his friendly presence introduced an atmosphere of fair play in which petty animosities did not flourish. The premature death of Arthur Clutton-Brock affected me still more closely. As a human being he was great fun, bubbling over with ideas and enthusiasm, all salted with disrespect for the popular Press and for pompous persons. 'Hullo, B—m,' once roared a big breezy divine, hailing Brock in Waterloo Place, slapping him violently on the back, and using his Eton nickname. 'Hullo, X, you ——!' returned Brock, smiling sweetly in spite of his anguish. 'And you know,' Brock told me afterwards, 'X, for once, looked quite foolish, and hadn't a word to say.'

As a man of letters, Brock was among the foremost of his day: as an art critic he never attained a position comparable to that held by Claude Phillips. I have related already how Phillips, through the 'Daily Telegraph,' compelled all England to recognize the importance of the Arts to civilization, and the world of amateur connoisseurs to respect trained scholarship. When that periodic check upon indifference, arrogance and blundering was withdrawn, the results were quickly apparent. It is hardly too much to say that with Claude Phillips there died the general appreciation of the Arts in England upon which not only Trafalgar Square and Bloomsbury, but Chelsea and Bond Street, the New English and the Academy, had existed for thirty years. No man of any similar gift has since appeared to fill the vacant place;

and it is not surprising. Standing by his death-bed in the summer of 1924, I noticed that his features, at rest, assumed a quite unexpected grandeur. This had been no ordinary intellect, but one far more comprehensive and powerful than we had ever guessed. Then, looking over the mass of his scribbled letters to me, I realized to the full how fortunate I had been in having known Claude Phillips so long and so well.

Nor can I forget two friends in the publishing world who died six months later. There could be no stronger contrast to Philip Lee-Warner, eager, impulsive, pugnacious, always the schoolboy, always in the midst of grand schemes and hot water, than the cool, diplomatic John Lane, who, after launching most of the poets and essayists of his day, was suspected by them all of having made a fortune out of their little books. The suspicion was rather unjust. As already mentioned, I did considerable business with Lane, and found him a keen man of affairs, but reliable and genuinely proud of giving a fair start to a promising beginner. Money-making firms avoid any such charitable ventures. To me Lane was a steady friend. We had common associations with Cornwall and with Stratton; he took an almost paternal interest in my doings; his clever wife and her books were great favourites with all my family. Once they borrowed from her a magnificent necklace for some domestic theatricals, and only when she asked rather anxiously for its return did they learn that the diamonds and emeralds were real. As for Lee-Warner, the advice I was once supposed to give him about books and pictures had long since expanded into mediation between him and his companions in business. Among his partners he seemed to lose the buoyant humour which made him the most delightful of friends, and the most unaccountable. But the flame of his energies burned too fiercely for Lee-Warner's physical strength. He died comparatively young; yet not before he had done almost as much for art, through his 'Medici' prints and publications, as John Lane had done for literature.

I have mentioned the death of Lord Curzon, but before I touch upon his last years, a few lesser incidents deserve to be recorded. The complete simplicity with which Mr. Samuel Courtauld came in to announce his gift of £50,000 for the purchase of Modern Foreign Pictures; with which Sir Joseph Duveen offered to build the Sargent Room at Millbank; and with which Sir Robert Witt offered me his wonderful Library of Photographs for Trafalgar Square (all in June-July 1923), was in refreshing contrast to the difficulties over the acceptance of the Claude Phillips Bequest, and to the protracted bargaining required before the Bequest of Dr. Mond could be finally arranged. Nor shall I forget the wretched red drugget, which was all that could be officially provided for the reception of the Crown Prince of Japan. We rolled the grubby thing up, while Gleadowe nobly rushed off in a taxi to fetch some of his fine silks and carpets for our distinguished guest to walk upon. That visit went off well; unlike one from the Duke of Connaught, when a young attendant managed not only to be rude, but to break the Duke's nice walking-stick.

Less discreditable, but more deeply wounding, was another experience. I had always paid Income Tax demands without question or examination, trusting to the accuracy of my brother officials. Suddenly the Inland Revenue discovered that there had been an omission in my assessments, and claimed first £300, and then £362, for retrospective arrears during the past five years. I had not the money, and begged for some compromise, since the mistake was not mine. Compromise with a Civil Servant could not be entertained; even two years' time in which to pay was obtained with difficulty. The possible injustice of the claim (for I could not really follow the calculations) hurt me far less than the rigour with which it was pressed.

Considering how to meet the demand, I remembered a fine drawing by Daumier, which I had intended to present to the Modern Foreign Gallery. Off it promptly went to Bond Street, and the £175 which it fetched went to stop

the hungry mouth of my Cerberus. But soon he was at me again; and then a miracle happened. A dealer's agent pressed me to sell a little painting which I had bought in my bachelor days. I don't sell my things, and, to put him off, said the price would be preposterous. Would I name it? Almost in jest, I added £200 to the highest value I could think of for such a canvas. The next morning I received a cheque, and was a free man once more. With that single exception, I had never sold (or bought) an old picture since I was married in 1903. The necessity of this precaution to avoid the tongue of slander was proved to me two years ago. At a sale, I got a poor £5 portrait to go over my studio mantelpiece. As I paid for it, a bystander kindly asked: 'What! Are you taking to dealing?'

In 1922, during the latter part of Lord Lansdowne's Chairmanship, Lord Curzon seemed to become more and more involved in high politics, until early in 1923, during Mr. Bonar Law's last illness, he was Acting Prime Minister. This prominence brought out his best qualities. One day he consulted me over the telephone about an appointment he proposed to make. The candidate was a friend and thoroughly capable, but too delicate, I feared, for a very trying post. Lord Curzon disagreed. A week or two later he sent for me to Carlton House Terrace to consult me about two pictures. When I had given my reasons for preferring one to the other, he laid his hand on my shoulder as I was leaving the room and said, 'I think you're a very shrewd fellow, Holmes.' I stepped out on to the first of the black and white marble squares in the hall, immensely flattered, my head swelling. But long before I had got to the footmen and my hat, common sense returned and I asked myself, 'What does he want?' I could think of nothing, and went round to my Club for lunch. The first news I saw on the notice-board was the very appointment I had questioned. Lord Curzon had just been letting me down kindly. The best of it was, he proved to be right and I to be wrong.

His man did excellent service, and did not break down for nearly three years.

About this time, a previous engagement compelled me to refuse a dinner invitation at a Club. My would-be host told me afterwards how much he regretted my absence, for I should have seen Lord Curzon in a new light. The other guests had been his Balliol contemporaries, and they started chaffing the great man, just as they used to do at Oxford. After a moment's pause, he met them in the same spirit and, as of old, became the life and soul of the party. Finally, one of them walked back with him to Carlton House Terrace. At his door, Lord Curzon suddenly asked, 'I say, R——, have I been giving myself away too much?' 'My dear George,' was the reply, 'had you given yourself away like that more often, you would have been Prime Minister long ago.'

The only sign of his disappointment about the Premiership which I noticed was an occasional return of his asperity. Once, at Carlton House Terrace, to which he was constantly summoning me, he muddled me so that I clean forgot our official telephone number. Quickly repenting, he let me off with his favourite comparison, 'You're as bad as the Foreign Office.' At another time, when I had prepared for him an elaborate *précis* of the Mond negotiations, he got so vexed with it, and with me, that we were twenty-five minutes late for the conference at which we were due. But, as usual, he made his *amende honorable* when reporting to the Board, by referring to 'the legal aspect of our case, which was argued by the Director with conspicuous ability.'

Meanwhile, I fancy, a fresh ambition was maturing. If he could not be Prime Minister, he would be King in the world of Art. Two years before, at the Spa Conference, he had shown his feeling about that. Socialism was in the air, and the talk turned upon what each of the company would do if dispossessed of place and income. 'The Law will always be wanted,' said Mr. Lloyd George. 'I should

just go back to my solicitor's business. But what about you, Balfour?' 'I suppose,' said Lord Balfour, 'that I should attempt to make a sort of living by writing articles on philosophy and history.' 'And you, Curzon?' 'Oh, I know all about Pictures and China and Furniture; I should take up Duveen's line, and make a second fortune.'

Succession to the Chairmanship of the National Gallery Board, which Lord Lansdowne now vacated, was the first step. Then the celebration of the National Gallery Centenary in the spring of 1924 brought Lord Curzon quickly to the front of the stage. He enjoyed the prominence. But instead of mellowing with success, his temper seemed thenceforth to grow more exacting, his judgment more capricious, his geniality and his sense of humour to be leaving him. What remained was distinctly formidable. We did all we could to avoid occasions of offence and keep well in the background, but his extensions of the Chairman's authority made it impossible to avoid, now and then, some protest, or raising of constitutional issues which, under Lord Lansdowne's rule, had been more or less reasonably determined. The strain had grown almost too much for our nerves when the end suddenly came. Not till much later did it dawn upon me that we had been dealing with one who, despite appearances, was already a very sick man.

At the time of Lord Curzon's death, this bruised condition prevented us, I think, from estimating him fairly. As he thrust forward, lapped in proof, he never quite saw how grievously a casual buffet might hurt men less well-armed for the *mêlée*. In after-thought, in the light of later experiences, he stands out to better advantage. When he fought, he fought in person; never stooping to decide a doubtful issue by intrigue at headquarters, by cabals, espionage, detraction, the resources of lesser men. Even his pride was not so much the pride of caste—of that he had less than was imputed—as a disdain for all, whatever their birth, who were unequal to his demands. Accustomed to flattery, he accepted it, and used it himself, as a form of address; suspecting it only



when it was unexpected. Having once backed a cause, he did not retreat or stand aside at the first show of opposition, with what, in high circles, passes for diplomacy and common people call funk. Like Lord Lansdowne he preserved the forms and sanity of debate, listening patiently to both sides and summing up with a singular absence of personal bias. One might fail to convince; but from him one seldom failed to get a fair hearing.

Whether this judicial temper, coupled with his other remarkable gifts, would have carried him through as Premier, is a question which contemporary opinion answered in the negative; and perhaps rightly. The jarring crises, the constant personal concessions, of democratic government were ill-suited to one who regarded politics as the most lofty of human callings. Had his chance come a century earlier, when a Minister might bear himself as an Olympian, even as a slightly florid Olympian, he would have been just the man for the part, taking Brummell's rather reluctant arm, and bandying pleasantries with the Prince Regent, as the one whose place in that Georgian Trinity was certainly not the lowest.

## EPILOGUE

REPRESENTATIONS from several quarters, quite independent of each other, urge me to place on record the evidence which I gave in 1928 before the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries. The matter of course falls outside the period of this book: the Report of the Commission was issued years ago, and any opinions not represented in it are, for all immediate purposes, as dead as Queen Anne. Yet my views on two points, though not expressed perhaps as I should express them now, still seem sound enough to be worth remembering when the affairs of the National Gallery next come before the public eye. I am therefore so far acceding to my correspondents' wishes as to reproduce just the paragraphs which bear directly upon these two points, and nothing else. The two points are :—

- (1) The desirability of defining the Director's power to decide purely technical questions.
- (2) The desirability of recovering and exhibiting at Trafalgar Square a group of the later water-colours by Turner.

On the first point I have already said enough. The need for some constitutional reform has been illustrated by a recent case, whereby it was shown that an officer of the Gallery has no valid protection against alleged injustice, nor any remedy but resignation of his post and his rights to a pension.

The sad plight of the Turner water-colours now pricks me far more sharply than any of these bygone anomalies.

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Not half-a-dozen of Turner's exhibited oil-paintings illustrate the quintessence of his genius—the supremely fascinating borderland where Painting touches the frontier of Music—as do these enchanting sketches. The best of them are unique in the whole history of the graphic arts, opening up such visions of light and colour and etherealized form as we find nowhere else.

Turner indeed is our Wagner, and it passes comprehension why we should now entomb his most triumphant products in remote portfolios, instead of keeping, as heretofore, a small selection on view at Trafalgar Square, where anyone can look in, *en passant*, and refresh himself for a few moments in the light of their beauty. The Print Room of the British Museum is a charming place—when once you have got there, with an hour or two at your disposal for study. The mass of Turner's sketches could not be in safer custody, but a few of the best deserve to be made more accessible.

I have always wished to see one room at the National Gallery devoted to Oriental painting: the contrast to our European modes of vision would be a valuable stimulus to design. Yet good Oriental paintings would have to be found, chosen and, frequently, purchased. The still more thrilling and instructive sketches by Turner in his final phase are already the property of the National Gallery, but we are taking such care of them that they cannot be seen there, or elsewhere, except by those with youthful legs and unlimited leisure. Possessing neither of these qualifications, I find myself cut off from the very form of art which delights me most. When I think of the arguments that were used to get these precious drawings away from Trafalgar Square to Millbank, of the flood there, and of their subsequent burial in the British Museum, my feelings almost get the better of me, and persuade me to conclude this little Testament, like Malachi, with a curse. I will leave it as a prayer to the powers that be.

(1) *The Administrative Problem*<sup>1</sup>

'Our system of purchase under the 1894 Minute, and as still further defined by The Lansdowne Resolutions of June, 1902, is one of purchase by Committee. The system has one disadvantage which is generally admitted, in that it tends to compromise, and to the loss of works of outstanding power and originality. All the greatest works of art have in them some element of the surprising and the unusual, to which the trained professional judgment is attracted immediately, but which is apt to shock the amateur at first sight, so that to him appreciation comes more slowly, and perhaps not at all. In consequence, one or two cautious members of a Committee, especially if they happen to be powerful and distinguished personages, may influence the rest by their hesitation, and block the purchase of the very works which by their surprising character should be the chief attractions of a great Gallery. Agreement will be reached only in the case of works which are inoffensive to all, and therefore supremely interesting to nobody. This was precisely what happened during the first 30 years of the Gallery's existence. The explosion that followed a long series of commonplace acquisitions of the Committee system cleared the way for the reforms of 1855, and purchase by an independent Director. This proved to be the making of the Gallery.

So much for theory. In practice, during my term of office, the Board, with one or two exceptions, and these not supremely important, has always acted on the Director's recommendation. But this apparent uniformity has brought one curious and serious disability in its train. Several of the most notable purchases have been made only at the cost of considerable controversy. Each controversy tends to leave a little bitterness behind, a bitterness which perhaps is inevitable where a man's personal taste seems to be at issue, and to be flouted by the purchase of a picture which he dislikes. In time this creates a very real difficulty for an active Director. Whenever he obtains a majority vote for a purchase, he runs the risk of alienating the confidence of friends in the minority, who cannot on this occasion see eye to eye with him. They prefer some other school, some other type of work, or may be frankly suspicious of the picture in question. In time the cumulative result of these disappoint-

<sup>1</sup> These and one or two shorter quotations are reprinted, by kind permission of the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office, from 'Oral Evidence Memoranda, etc., of the Royal Commission on National Museums and Galleries' (London, H.M. Stationery Office, 1928. Price £1, 1s. net).

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ments will be to create a strong body of doubt, if not of definite opposition, upon the Board which would be fatal to the Director's influence. Unless the Director be a man of immense determination and courage, he will begin to feel that his task is hopeless, and to avoid giving further occasion to hostility will be careful to recommend nothing that is not inoffensive to the Board, with a result that the purchases tend to be as undistinguished as those of a Committee pure and simple. Such a breakdown of the Director's energy and initiative would, of course, be a deplorable thing for a great Gallery; since it is by the exercise of these qualities that all great Galleries have been made.

The fear of it is no imaginary thing. I myself, for example, have not used the powers of emergency purchase which are nominally granted to the Director, simply because experience showed me that they were hedged round with so many cautionary restrictions that their employment would have led to immediate and formidable controversy. We have not perhaps lost much thereby, and I have been saved the trouble of hunting the sale-rooms as carefully as I used to hunt them for the National Portrait Gallery, but the fact may be cited to show how dread of unpleasantness, even in a relatively trivial matter, may hamper a Director's energies. For it must not be forgotten that the very eminence of the Trustees, and the fact that the majority of them are famous in debate and in public affairs, places a Director at a great disadvantage the moment he has to discuss questions of principle and procedure, and at some disadvantage even when the controversy is more or less technical. He cannot always be so ready with his arguments, so apposite in his illustrations, or so just in his phrasing, as men whose lives have been spent round the Council table. He cannot hope to succeed in a discussion with such men, especially when they may be said to belong to a society apart from his, with direct access perhaps to the Cabinet or even to the Prime Minister, unless his case is so overwhelming as to speak for itself. Even then some phrase for which he is not prepared may lead to his undoing. Unless, therefore, his powers, both personal and statutory, are considerable, the professional adviser to a Board of Trustees is likely to find after a time that he has to struggle against an opposition which is too strong for him. That is the inherent fault of the 1894 system.

Although I am in general agreement with Lord Carlisle's Memorandum of June, 1902, a return to the constitution of 1855 might be distasteful to some members of the Board, as

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diminishing too much the authority to which they have become accustomed. I think the practical working of the Department would be greatly improved by a much less drastic change, which can best be understood by a brief summary of the historical facts. The constitution of 1894 soon gave rise to internal difficulties, and led to severe external criticism of the ineffectiveness of the Board at a time when fine pictures were rapidly leaving the country. As a constitution, indeed, it did not differ in essentials from the practice of the National Portrait Gallery, which had worked without a single hitch during the whole seven years of my Directorship there. But on coming to Trafalgar Square I found that the constitution was interpreted in a wholly different spirit, with a wholly different tradition, and a wholly different conception of the relation of the Trustees to the Director. At the National Portrait Gallery the Director was a professional adviser to the Board, and administrator of the Gallery, whom the Trustees united to help and encourage. At Trafalgar Square his opinion seemed neither to be asked nor expected. As the controversies between Lord Lansdowne and Sir Edward Poynter were on record, and as the breakdown of Sir Charles Holroyd under the system had just occurred, I saw that this attitude was not personal to myself but was the tradition of the place. Lord Plymouth acted as mediator in the discussions which ensued, and an assurance was obtained from Lord Curzon that in 99 per cent. of the technical matters discussed the Board would accept the Director's opinion. This assurance, coupled with permission to make an emergency purchase up to £2000, with the consent of two Trustees, removed for the time being the more prominent disabilities of the Director and Staff.

Hitherto the Chair at each meeting had been taken by the senior Trustee who happened to be present. The appointment in 1919 of a permanent Chairman created a new division of authority, but as I had worked under Lord Dillon in that capacity at the National Portrait Gallery with perfect ease, the position was not unfamiliar. And with Lord Lansdowne, the first Chairman, constitutional precedent was so carefully observed that few difficulties arose. His successor, Lord Curzon, so far enlarged the activities and authority of the Chairmanship, that by degrees the Director's authority was gradually absorbed. The cleaning of pictures, for example, being a highly technical matter, had hitherto been done by the Director's order and on his responsibility. Now the services of a foreign picture-cleaner were pressed upon him strongly by certain members of the Board,

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and on the Director's refusal to take responsibility for the change he was ordered to report to the Board before any cleaning of importance was undertaken (January, 1925). Shortly afterwards the Director was forbidden to make any change in the attribution of pictures in the Gallery without first reporting to the Board. Two years later the Trustees rejected the Director's plan for hanging new acquisitions. By these and other decisions of minor importance, the Director's power of making any change in the arrangement, repair or labelling of the collections without risking a conflict with the Board was extinguished. Even the propriety of his encouraging important gifts to the Gallery was seriously challenged. . . .

In default of any more drastic remedy, it would be no small help to harmonious working if some distinction could be drawn officially and formally between the technical matters on which the officers of the Department may be presumed to speak with professional authority, and those matters of general and financial policy where the counsel of the distinguished amateurs forming the Board would be of service. Such technical matters would seem to include the cataloguing, attribution, cleaning, restoration and arrangement of the pictures in the collection, with the selection of the suitable frames and backgrounds for them. The right of the Director to decline pictures which he considers unsuitable has never been challenged. It would be well in addition to define beyond question his right of purchase and acquisition in emergencies, and of settling the organisation and work of the departmental staff. He would then be able to use his technical knowledge to proper advantage, although his powers would still be less than those of the Directors of most of the great Continental Galleries, or than those of his predecessors of 1855-1894—by far the most notable epoch in our Gallery's history. Such a definition, after all, would be hardly more than a formal embodiment of the assurance given by Lord Curzon in 1916, to which I have already referred.

In greater matters, the authority of the Trustees might well remain as it is in the 1894 arrangement. By separating out this technical business we should at once remove one of the most constant causes of friction, . . . not only possible friction with a Director, but a certain amount of trouble with the staff. They (the staff) can never know . . . whether they are not liable to do something which is going to get either themselves or someone else into trouble with the Board. The result is that the actual working of the place is delayed by people wanting to know whether they have authority for the smallest thing,

because they do not know whether it will be brought up in judgment afterwards or not. I think it would make all our lives a great deal easier if—and now I am speaking as a human being and not merely as an official—we could be relieved of that risk.

I want the Commission to recognise that a sensible Director would not in any important issue commit himself, if he had the least doubt, without telling one or two members of the Board what he intended to do. . . . I do not feel that in giving some of these powers to the Director you do anything really except help him to get through what is an enormous amount of work with the least possible friction.'

## (2) *The Turner Water-Colours*

'The collection of Turner drawings may quite logically be divided into two parts. The first part contains some three or four thousand water-colour drawings, finished or partially finished, which are of very great aesthetic interest and value, and have a very considerable market value, since a great many of them belong to the phase of Turner which is most highly valued by collectors all over the world.

The second portion consists of sketch books in pencil—isolated sketches in pencil—mere scribbles and note books, of which I believe there must be something like 12,000—the material from which Turner composed his pictures. Those have a very definite historical interest for the few, really few, students of Turner. They have all, by the action of the Trustees in the past, been arranged in good order, and if they were deposited on loan in the British Museum they could there be stored and kept in the way which would make them most useful to the occasional student.

The coloured drawings, on the other hand, ought to be retained by the Trustees, because they are part of the nucleus of Turner, which is perhaps the largest remaining asset that the Trustees have for interchange of loans. A group of Turner water-colours might well go with any show of English pictures, because there is nothing which is better calculated to show the originality and greatness of the English School. If those were once deposited anywhere else, as at the British Museum, we at the National Gallery would be divesting ourselves, quite unnecessarily, of one of the most valuable parts of the possessions with which we are entrusted. And I venture to say that at the British Museum they would be infinitely less accessible, when



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once put away in their portfolios, than they may ultimately become if they are looked after either at Trafalgar Square or at Millbank. When the question of custody at Millbank arose a few weeks ago, my colleague spoke to me about this, and I said at once: "If you are in any doubt let me have them at the National Gallery and I will somehow or other make arrangements for their custody, short-handed as we are." I think it is most important that the Trustees should not be induced to relinquish by any specious arguments, something which is not only extraordinarily creditable to English Art but which is very closely wrapped up with the unique collection of Turner paintings which we possess.'

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